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**COCHIN**  
**ON**  
**THE MASS.**

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**INSTRUCTIONS**  
**ON THE**  
**PRAYERS & CEREMONIES**  
**OF THE**  
**Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.**

**TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF M. COCHIN,**  
**AND ARRANGED FOR EACH SUNDAY THROUGHOUT THE YEAR:**

**By W. Jos. WALTER,**  
**LATE OF ST. EDMUND'S COLLEGE, AND TRANSLATOR OF THE**  
**MARTYRS OF CHATEAUBRIAND.**

**VOL. I.**

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**LONDON:**

**PRINTED FOR KEATING BROWN AND KEATING, 38, DUKE-STREET,**  
**GROSVENOR SQUARE, AND BOOKER, 61, NEW BOND STREET.**  
**BY C. MUNRO AND CO. DUMFRIES.**

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**1814.**

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TO THE  
HONOURABLE FRANCES BOWATER,

**This Translation**

OF AN AUTHOR, WHOSE WORKS SHE ADMIRES,  
AND WHOSE PRECEPTS SHE SO WELL ILLUSTRATES IN  
PRACTICE ;

IS INSCRIBED

WITH SENTIMENTS OF GRATITUDE AND RESPECT,

BY HER MUCH OBLIGED

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## PREFACE

BY THE TRANSLATOR.

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**I** TRUST no apology will be required for offering the present Translation to the Catholic public. They are not, at least as far as I can learn, possessed of any work on this subject, at once concise and satisfactory; which contains just sufficient of the history and origin of the rites and ceremonies of the Mass, to awaken the interest and excite the curiosity of the reader, without interfering with those purposes of practical utility, which should form its principal object. Of the various authors who have treated this subject, the one class

is occupied in tracing, with laborious minuteness, the customs and general economy of the primitive church, in crowding their pages with the testimonies of early writers, or in answering the cavils of modern critics:—works of this description are consequently too voluminous, and of too *antiquarian* a cast to suit the generality of readers.\* The tracts of the other class are of too barren and confined a nature to afford any satisfactory view of this important subject; or to gratify that laudable curiosity which all must feel to learn the import of ceremonies and observances, at which they daily assist.† Something seemed wanting to remedy this defect of prolixity on the one hand, and this want of satisfactory information on the other. The present work of M. Cochin appeared to hold the happy medium, and seemed well calculated to supply

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\* *Vide* Le Brun Sur les ceremonies, &c. de la Messe; Picart, &c.

† *Vide* Baker's Dialogue—Heigham's Exposition, &c. &c.

the deficiency :—under this impression the Translation was undertaken.

The present volume forms the fifth of a collection of this author's works, which rank high in the estimation of his countrymen. As a proof of this, it may be sufficient to mention, that the Instructions here offered to the public, have been adopted in several of the French chapels. May I hope that our author's merits will be as fully appreciated, though he appear in an English dress :—indeed, there are some points on which he cannot fail of ensuring general approbation. He has been particularly solicitous to avoid that mystic character—too much the taste of certain writers on this head—which in its attempt to give a mysterious construction to every trivial circumstance, every plain and obvious expression, has involved the whole subject in obscurity. 'As faith is simple in its principles,' says our author, 'so is it equally clear and simple in the precepts it lays down

for general practice: my object, therefore, in these Instructions, is to deduce such consequences as may come home more nearly to our own bosoms, such as are most conducive to edification, and best calculated to give animation to faith, and fresh fervour to devotion.' In consequence of his adhering to this rule, nothing is over-strained or affected; his illustrations are appropriate and agreeable, and his various reflections spring naturally from the subject. As he approaches the more solemn and impressive parts of the Mass, he gradually rises in warmth and interest; not unfrequently he will be found both pathetic and sublime; his animation never seems to desert him, and he maintains a placid and uniform glow to the very conclusion. There is also another point in which he will be found particularly happy. Of the various responses and minor prayers employed by the church, the greater part are apt to be hastily passed over, as objects of inferior im-

portance, and at length, by the frequency of the repetition, become a mere succession of unmeaning words. On subjects like these—as for instance, the *Kyrie Eleison*, the *Amen*, the *Alleluia*, the *Dominus Vobiscum*, &c. he dwells with marked attention; and, by displaying the particular occasions in which they originated, rouses the attention, and elicits truths, which make a deeper impression, from the very circumstance of their being drawn from sources where they were least expected to be found. At the same time, we are never wearied by any tedious digressions, or startled with any unmeaning exaggerations: on the contrary, there is a character of engaging simplicity, that wins strongly upon the reader, accompanied by a tone of calm and tempered dignity, which breathes throughout the whole. In short, to sum up the merits of the author in a single sentence, I will adopt the words of the learned Doctors of the Sorbonne, in their *Approbation* subjoin-



ed to the work:—‘ These Instructions appear well adapted to strengthen the faith and animate the piety of the faithful; as well as to inspire those sentiments of veneration, gratitude, and love, with which all should be penetrated, who assist at this adorable sacrifice, where the Son of God himself is at once the priest and the victim.’

On the utility and importance of the present subject, it would be superfluous to dwell. A clear and satisfactory explanation of the chief mystery of our holy religion—a mystery that, in some measure, includes every other, cannot prove unacceptable to the Catholic. ‘ The chief and essential duty of Christians on Sundays and holidays, says Dr Milner, is to assist worthily at the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Accordingly, pastors are strictly enjoined by the last general council,\* frequently to expound to the people the nature and ends there-

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\* Conc. Trid. Sess. 22. cap. viii.

of; notwithstanding which, *the most lamentable inattention and fatal ignorance as to these matters are found to be too generally prevalent.* Hence it is evident, that the most important and profitable instruction that can be proposed to the people before Mass, is such as is calculated to raise their attention and devotion to these awful mysteries.' It is hoped that the Instructions here offered to the Catholic public, will be found to answer these important ends. They are not designed exclusively for the pulpit. From the light and interest thrown on many of the customs and ceremonies of the primitive church, but above all from the familiar manner in which the subject is treated, it is presumed they will be perused in private families, not merely with pleasure, but with practical utility.

I wish I could flatter myself that this volume would circulate beyond the precincts of our own church; that it would be perused by our Protestant brethren,

in the same spirit of candour in which it was written. From their infancy, they have been accustomed to hear the very word *Mass* pronounced with certain indistinct feelings of horror and aversion, the justice of which they have wanted either the patience or the liberality to examine. Is there then such magic in a name? Can those who pride themselves upon a total emancipation from blind credulity, suffer themselves to be deluded on this point alone? I am aware, that in studying the history of their country, and turning over her very laws, they have been accustomed to hear this principal object of our religion anathematized as an act of damnable idolatry; they have seen the reasoning of the learned and the pleasantry of the infidel directed with more than usual zeal against this most essential part of the Catholic worship. Were the candid Protestant, under these impressions, to peruse the following short Instructions, delivered by M. Cochin for the edification of a Catholic

audience, and that under circumstances which can excite no suspicion of his being influenced by any sinister motives, perhaps, he might be induced to confess, that the *Mass*, of which he has been taught to think with so much horror, is nothing more than the simple ‘Communion Service’ of the Catholic church; that an act of worship, so well calculated to enlighten the mind, and affect the heart, cannot possibly have that pernicious and damnable tendency which he has heard urged with so much vehemence. Perhaps he might be astonished to hear these words from the mouth of a writer, who, as he was an enemy to all religion, can be suspected by no party of any interested views in the testimony he gives. ‘Behold the man’, he exclaims, ‘who, amidst the awful ceremonies of the Mass, receives the holy communion! His whole soul is seized, and strongly affected. Hardly does he breathe. He is detached from every thing earthly:—he is united to

his God. God is incorporated with his flesh and blood. Who will dare—who possibly can, after such an action, be guilty of any future relapse into sin? Is it possible to imagine a mystery that could bind men more forcibly to virtue?\*

I purposed offering a few observations on the ceremonies of the Catholic church, which have afforded her adversaries so copious a theme for misrepresentation and abuse. But, as these prefatory remarks have already swelled beyond their intended limits, I shall content myself with remarking, that if, to the most casual observer, our religious rites appear so awful and impressive, how much more powerful must their effect be, when connected with all those affecting associations that endear them to the mind of the Catholic? To notice but a single instance:—In the tapers that blaze on our altars even at mid-day, the stranger, attracted by mere curiosity,

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\* Questions sur L'Encyclopedie, par Voltaire.

sees nothing but a subject for empty wonder, while in the mind of the Catholic they awaken the affecting recollection of those times of obscurity and persecution, when the primitive Christians were obliged to conceal their awful mysteries, and the secrets of their faith, amidst the gloom of caverns and subterranean recesses. ‘The absurd rigourists,’ says an author, who spoke from no motives of interest or predilection—‘the absurd rigourists in religion, know nothing of the effect of external ceremonies on the minds of the people. They create an enthusiasm, which I sometimes feel. I never witness the solemnity of a procession, the long train of priests arrayed in their sacerdotal attire, the crowds which precede and follow them in religious silence, the multitudes prostrate before the sanctuary;—I never hear their grave and pathetic music, without the strongest sensations of devotion, and without the tribute of a tear. If you suppress

the sensible symbols of religion, the rest becomes a metaphysical gallimatia, as varied as the variety of men's understandings.\*

Before parting with the reader, it would be unjust not to remind him, that the present Translation was undertaken at the sole suggestion of a clergyman, a native of Germany, the Rev. Charles Dobeler, Chaplain to his late R. H. the Archbishop Elector of Cologne, Prince Bishop of Munster, &c. a gentleman not less distinguished for his superior talents and accomplishments, than for his zeal in the cause of religion. To him it first occurred, that a work of the present description was a desideratum in our Catholic catalogue, and by him this Translation was patronized. Whatever merit, therefore, the public may be pleased to attach to this performance, to him it must, in justice, be ultimately referred.

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\* Diderot. *Essai sur la Peinture*.

# INSTRUCTIONS

ON THE

## PRAYERS, &c.

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### ON THE UTILITY OF INSTRUCTIONS ON THE PRAYERS AND CEREMONIES OF THE LITURGY.

For if the blood of goats and of oxen sanctify such as are defiled, how much more shall the blood of Christ cleanse our conscience from dead works?—HEB. chap. ix. 13 and 14.

**W**HEN we learn, my brethren, that in the first ages of Christianity, the ministers of the holy word judged it a matter of duty to draw a parallel between the sacrifices of the law of Moses and that of Jesus Christ, we feel no surprise; we can well imagine that they felt the necessity of instructing the faithful in the principles on which our faith and confidence are grounded, and of detaching a carnal-minded people from legal ceremonies, in order to conduct them to those dispositions which a divine and spiritual victim requires. But to employ the same motives to arouse our languid faith; to remind



the Christians of our days of the sacrifices of a dead law, in order to contrast them with the true and living victim of the new covenant, would be to draw a comparison the most reproachful and humiliating. That faith, indeed, must be lamentably defective, and feebly enlightened, which cannot, at a single glance, discover the immense difference between the two oblations, whether with respect to the dignity of the ministry, the excellence of the victim, or the value of the sacrifice. But if this comparison, when attentively pursued, be found to incline in favour of the sacrifice of the new law, I am apprehensive lest another parallel, which necessarily follows from the former, should turn to the advantage of the Jewish people, and the confusion of Christians. That religious awe, which the former testified when they assisted at the solemnities of the sacrifice; their assiduity in attending the temple, and offering the oblation for all their necessities; their vigilance in guarding against those legal pollutions from which they had been purified by the sacred rites: Do not all these demonstrations of zeal condemn the indifference—the irreverence with which Christians assist at the sacrifice of the Mass; the languor and tepidity with which they frequent the holy mysteries, and the little advantage they derive from their participation?

The force of this comparison will more strikingly appear in the course of these instructions. Too often, alas! shall we have occasion to lament the weakness of our faith, in following the church

through each of those prayers and ceremonies which she employs in the sacrifice of our altars; we shall behold her animated throughout with that spirit of faith, of confidence, and of holy recollection, which may make us blush at our negligence and tepidity—not to say our irreverences and profanations.

This truth, my brethren, will furnish us with very salutary reflections. Each prayer, each circumstance of the sacrifice, will present matter for varied instruction. We shall here discover many duties that have been overlooked, many resources that have been neglected; we shall see, with astonishment, that many of those prayers which we recited, and of those ceremonies at which we assisted, contain a sense and a spirit, which have, heretofore, escaped our observation.

In this series of instructions we shall follow the same order as the church herself observes throughout the liturgy; and, in referring to her ancient usages, in order to illustrate those that have been transmitted to our own times, we shall see, with consolation, that though the church may have varied her discipline, her spirit is unalterable; that although, in externals, she has yielded to times and circumstances, that nothing can induce her to alter the essentials of her worship, because these are built upon faith, whose foundations are as unshaken as her dogmas are immutable.

But, my brethren, before we enter upon a subject so extensive and profound, let us examine,

with attention, the motives that give a value to instructions of this kind, the dispositions with which we ought to devote ourselves to this study, and the fruits we may expect from the application.

I do not flatter myself with the idea of communicating any new truths. This extensive subject has been treated by writers of such learning and judgment, that I have reason to believe their principles have made a deep impression on your minds: yet still there remains scope for my own exertions; and I shall endeavour to draw such consequences from these truths, as may come home more nearly to our own bosoms—our own dispositions and practice. Let it not be imagined that I am entering upon a disquisition, rather curious than useful, on the external rites that accompany this august sacrifice; my object is a simple exposition, as well of ancient usages, and the spirit that animated them, as of ceremonies of later institution, and the sense and edification which faith and piety may thence derive. I may likewise congratulate myself upon hazarding nothing but what has been derived from the purest sources. I shall, in particular, be cautious to avoid that mysticity, which, while it has prompted some men of more piety than learning, to find a mystery in every thing, affords nothing but a false or ambiguous interpretation. As faith is simple in its principles, so is it always clear in the precepts it lays down for general practice.

It is by this simple faith, my brethren, that we are admonished not to remain in ignorance of the

exterior worship which accompanies the oblation of the sacrifice ; that if in our daily attendance at rites the most hallowed, the most ancient, and the most significant, we bring nothing but a spirit of indifference and disrelish, this most awful of mysteries will be soon frequented out of mere compliance with general custom ; it teaches us, that it is not sufficient to be contented with general instructions on the grounds of these mysteries, if we neglect the continual application which the church makes thereof in her prayers and her ceremonies : in short, that the langour with which we recite these prayers, almost always arises from the little attention we bestow on the relation which they bear to each particular mystery. This same faith informs us, by the mouth of the apostle St Peter, that we belong, in quality of Christians, to the sacerdotal order ; we ought, therefore, to regard these holy truths, as a part of instruction adapted to the priestly office with which God has invested us, and to remember, that the neglect thereof would not only render us less worthy of fulfilling these sublime functions, but also expose us to that terrible anathema, which God pronounced by his prophet against the negligent ministers of the old law ; ‘ Because you have despised knowledge, I will reject you from my priesthood.’

I am aware that it is possible to unite in prayer with the officiating minister, and to offer, in conjunction with him, the adorable victim, without knowing the origin, studying the succession, or

penetrating into the mystery of each of the prayers that compose the liturgy ; I know that we have instances of Christians, simple, and yet sufficiently enlightened, who are ignorant of these particulars, and yet assist with profit at the holy sacrifice of the Mass ; and that, moreover, these prayers themselves offer, in so simple and so precise a manner, the spiritual sense they are intended to convey, that to read them is to comprehend them, and to comprehend them is to imbibe their spirit. Let me not, therefore, be understood as charging those Christians with negligence and contempt, who, on this subject, act in conformity to the early impressions of a learned and solid education. It is not against them that the anathema, which I have just quoted from one of the prophets, is directed ; and I doubt not but the greater number of my present hearers have found, in the instructions of their youth, or in the habitual application which they give to the truths of salvation, sufficient to secure their minds against the terrors of this alarming menace. Yet the more they are instructed, the more strongly will they feel the necessity of refreshing their minds in the knowledge already acquired, the more sensibly will they feel the consolation of recalling to mind, and meditating on those principles which add vigour to their faith, and fervour to their piety. To such persons it would, probably, be superfluous to descant on the dispositions with which we ought to study the prayers and the ceremonies that compose the holy liturgy. Pos-

sessed, as of course they must be, of faith, learning and docility, they cannot but feel how very repugnant a spirit of curiosity is to this kind of study. They will recollect, that in the first ages of Christianity, the faithful honoured the tremendous mysteries, not only by their assiduity, their fervour, and their holy recollection, but also by the profound silence they observed respecting the rites and ceremonies established by the first pastors. Happily, they were then strangers to that spirit of cavilling and dispute, which but too often perverts a mystery of charity into a source of division and sophistry. Unanimous, as to the essence of the mystery, they were but little solicitous to dispute about the manner of its performance. Guided by these examples, my brethren, let us be cautious how we advance any of those subtile questions, which, in these latter times, have but too much agitated the minds of men. Should any portion of this ferment yet remain, may we hope that this simple exposition of the doctrine of the fathers, and the spirit of the church, may destroy it for ever. We shall pass unnoticed many questions useful in themselves, but which rather concern the ministers who officiate, than the faithful that assist at the sacrifice. In a word, we shall principally keep in view what is most conducive to edification and instruction; what is most calculated to reform abuses, and establish useful regulations, to give animation to faith, and fresh fervour to devotion. May the great Author of all good grant that our efforts may prove effec-

tual to utility and to edification ! And what is the utility we are to expect from these instructions ?

The first good effect is to strengthen us in the faith of that mystery, which is the great object of the whole liturgy ; since the prayers that compose it, and the ceremonies that accompany these prayers, bear an essential relation to a God, at once the offerer of the oblation, the priest, and the sacrifice ; to a God present upon our altars as the expiatory victim for sin, and yet filling, on the right hand of his heavenly Father, the function of intercessor ; to him, whose delight is to dwell among the children of men, as it is his glory to occupy the first place in the kingdom of his Father ; who, in the Eucharist, has so far humbled himself as to become our nourishment, and yet is more exalted than the heavens, by the inherent rights of his divinity. Every prayer that we recite reminds us of these sublime truths, and engraves them more deeply upon our hearts.

Secondly, it renders our minds conformable to those dispositions which the prayers and ceremonies inspire. Faith, contrition, confidence, vigilance, humility, a spirit of prayer, and all the Christian virtues, are traced out in the plan which the church follows, in offering the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Here we are presented with an abridgement of our whole religion, an epitome of all its mysteries, and behold, at a single glance, all the obligations which the gospel imposes ; here, in some measure, we find a sample of all the promises of which faith had

given us but an imperfect glimpse, together with a foretaste of that happiness which is destined for us by the mercy of God. Thus the Christian, who is instructed in the sense and spirit of these ceremonies, finds therein all that can enlighten the mind, and nourish the heart.

Thirdly, it inspires us with an habitual spirit of submission and of sacrifice. Were we feelingly convinced of the force and energy of the terms which the church employs in the oblation of this sacrifice, it would not be difficult to persuade us, that as Jesus Christ never divested himself of the quality of a victim, so we must never forget that we are become victims with him; that if, even after the oblation of the sacrifice, and the consummation of the victim in the communion, Jesus Christ perpetuates, in some degree, both the one and the other, by his presence in our tabernacles, in order that, during each moment of the day, the Christian may find consolation, nourishment, and strength, amidst his greatest necessities; in like manner we should not confine ourselves to a passing union with this adorable victim, but at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances, we should regard ourselves as victims destined to perpetual immolation, and renew in our hearts all those dispositions with which the church has inspired us in her prayers and ceremonies.

Such, my brethren, are the principal advantages which we may promise ourselves from a regular application to the different parts of the Mass. I



say *principal* advantages ; for this spirit of faith is productive of the most inexhaustible resources and the tenderest consolations. There are no spiritual afflictions, no temptations, no tribulations, that can discompose the Christian, who, with Jesus Christ, is become the sacrifice, and, in Jesus Christ, the victim. There are no duties, no obligations, but what afford a source of spiritual sweetness, and the practice of which is not rendered easy to the Christian, when he has derived strength and courage from the efficacy of this sacrifice.

Let us, therefore, form a resolution to devote ourselves to this study with all possible care, vigilance, and assiduity. I will neglect nothing on my part to correspond to the importance of the subject ; and I have the confidence to believe, my brethren, that you will listen to these instructions with that spirit of faith and of piety which may render you secure of the fruits of my exertions ; fruits that may be permanent, that may prove your comfort in the present life, and your everlasting consolation in the life to come.—Amen.

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#### ON THE EXCELLENCE OF THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

We have an altar, whereof they have no power to eat who serve the tabernacle.—Epist. HEB. xiii. v. 10.

**L**ET us leave to the carnal Jew the pomp of ceremonial rites, and the dazzling spectacle of magnificent decorations ; let him display to the eyes of the

universe a temple which, both by the majesty of its structure, and the immensity of its edifices, had been the wonder of ages, to whose power it so long bade defiance; let him astonish the neighbouring nations by the order of his sacrifices, the splendour of his ceremonies, the numerous train of priests and Levites, and the gorgeous vestments of the sacrificers; let him proclaim the greatness of the God he adores by the multitude of victims immolated to his supreme majesty, by the beauty of the loud-toned canticles that are chaunted to his glory, by the uniformity of worship observed in his honour: we, my brethren, whose religious worship, less magnificent and less imposing in its form, is confined to adore a hidden God, to immolate an invisible victim, to offer an unbloody sacrifice, we regret not the absence of this pomp, this splendour, this magnificence; and, after the example of the great apostle, we may confidently say—that in compensation for these numerous victims we have one only host; to replace this temple and this tabernacle, only one altar; to supply all these sacrifices only one oblation: but a host so effective, an altar so holy, and a sacrifice so pure, that all their legal purifications could not confer a power on the priests of the old law to participate therein. Yet let it never be forgotten that we can derive neither glory nor advantage from this superiority which God has given us over the old law, except we learn to estimate the true value of so great a sacrifice, and bring such dispositions as correspond to the excellence and the

sanctity of the victim that is immolated. But, alas ! how often do the most negligent and indifferent of those that call themselves Christians, assist at this oblation, which charity itself offers to the Father ; how often do the most criminal and corrupt participate in the victim which was immolated for sin ? In this respect we are surpassed even by the carnal Jew ; for so far from honouring in spirit and truth a victim that is spirit and life, we can scarcely claim that as a title of praise, which Jesus Christ pronounced on this people as a title of reproach : That at least they honoured their God with their lips : a species of homage rejected without doubt, and exemplified in the Jewish people, merely with a view to conduct us to that interior, that profound and spiritual homage required by this most august of mysteries, and most holy of oblations. Let us, my brethren, endeavour fully to appreciate the excellency of this oblation, that we may be the better enabled, in the course of these instructions, to understand the end of the ceremonies that accompany it.

It is a sacrifice offered in all places, and at all times ; which has been continued since the origin of Christianity, and shall be perpetuated to the consummation of ages ; a sacrifice offered for all our necessities, destined to efface all our sins, and concentrating in itself every species of oblation ; a sacrifice, in which not only the members of the church militant participate, but also the citizens of heaven, by the union of their homages, and the sorrowful inha-

bitants of the place of expiation, by the resources which they thence derive for their deliverance from this fiery probation; a sacrifice in which every thing is holy, whether we consider the supreme object of the offering, the victim which is immolated, or the end for which it is offered; a sacrifice, in fine, which supplies every other oblation, supercedes every other sacrifice, disannuls every strange offering, and in some measure absorbs every other degree of merit, homage, and adoration, due to the supreme being:—indeed, is he not the sacrifice by excellence, alone worthy of bearing that name, alone capable of comprising all its effects? What I have here offered is but a small part of the properties which the fathers and holy doctors of the church have attributed to the sacrifice of the Mass; and in the ceremonies which it is our present object to explain, the church will unfold many others. Let us take a summary view of these different prerogatives, in order to form some adequate idea of the dignity and importance of this oblation.

It is a sacrifice offered in every place, according to the celebrated prophecy of Malachias: ‘In every place there is offered to my name a clean offering.’—Wherever the church of Jesus Christ extends, wherever his name is adored, or his religion and morality practised, an order of ministers, consecrated by the same unction, inheritors of the same power, and invested with the same character, address the same supplications to the Almighty, present the same offering, and pour forth the blood of

the same attoning victim. Nations, however dis-united by diversity of climate, or distinguished by variety of laws and characters, are on this point united. They form here below that marvellous concordance which St John beheld in spirit in the Isle of Patmos, when he saw a mighty multitude which no man could number, speaking the same language, chaunting the same canticle, and exclaiming in united voices of loud and triumphant jubilation: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth! honour, glory, and dominion be to him who reigns in the highest heavens, and to the Lamb who was immolated for the salvation of his people!

It is a sacrifice offered at all times: I might say at each hour of the day, since the diversity of climates, and the varied revolutions of the luminary that enlightens our system, seem to have been determined for no other end than to perpetuate this august oblation; for, when we cease in this quarter of the globe to offer the eucharistic victim, other priests in other lands succeed us in this awful function. Our canticles suffer no interruption; there is no pause from prayer; and the church upon earth, like that triumphant in heaven, repeats incessantly, and is for ever magnifying, the virtue, honour and power, that belong to our God, and to the victim who sanctifieth our altars.

It is a sacrifice that has been offered ever since the origin of Christianity, that is to say, from the moment that Jesus Christ delivered that consoling precept to his apostles—‘Do this in remembrance

of me.' We can produce the most unequivocal evidence to show, that, since that memorable period, the apostles and their successors have evinced the most constant zeal and fidelity to perpetuate this salutary institution. Tradition, obscure upon some points of ancient discipline, presents, with regard to this oblation, a succession of documents, the most luminous, and the best substantiated. We have the testimony of St Paul, who transmitted to the faithful of Corinth the instructions which he had received from the Lord himself: we have the united testimony of apostles, disciples, pontiffs, and martyrs; the doctors of the church have, from age to age, spoken of this as a perpetual sacrifice, a universal oblation, a mystery, which the church shall incessantly renew and perpetuate here in time, till it shall be consummated in eternity.

It is also a sacrifice that shall endure to the end of ages. The church, it is true, has power to vary the most sacred of her rites, in order to meet the exigencies of particular times and circumstances: she abolishes in one age what would have been religiously observed in another, because either the dispositions or the necessities of her children have undergone a change; but she is always uniform as to the essentials of the sacrifice; she can never suffer these to be altered; and when she has occasion to add any prayers to the liturgy, or retrench therefrom, she is always careful to preserve the dogma of the mystery in its original purity, in order that the faithful of every age may, by such

practices as correspond to its ineffable sanctity, unite themselves to an oblation which has their salvation for its object, and the glory of God for its essential end.

It is a sacrifice offered for all our necessities, and designed by its institution to obtain for us every kind of grace.—Graces that are spiritual—which consist in contrition of heart, detestation of sin, and love of justice ; it is from this source that the Christian derives vigilance, fidelity, and power, to accomplish all the commandments : it is here that he finds consolation under all his afflictions, repose amidst all the tumults of his soul, and counsel in all his perplexities ; it is here that he acquires force against temptation, and vigilance against the seductions of flesh and blood.—Graces that are temporal—for Jesus Christ disdains not, in this oblation, to present such petitions to his Father as have for their object the blessings of this life, provided they are accompanied by docility, and are not the dictates of unthankful avarice. In fine, the universal necessities of the church and her children, the particular wants of our friends, our relations, and our neighbours ; of our superiors, our dependants, our equals, and even of our enemies ; the consolation, in particular, of those who have preceded us, and who are groaning for a season under the weight of divine justice, together with our own personal necessities, whatever they may be :—all are included in the merits of this oblation, which Jesus Christ makes of himself, and expressed in the prayers that accompany the sacrifice.

It is, moreover, a sacrifice destined to efface all our sins. We have no longer need of the blood of heifers, or of the emissary goat; we no longer ground our justification upon the aspersions which were made by the high-priest; we are not obliged to seek a separate victim to efface each particular stain; we possess in the one only victim which is immolated upon our altars, a superabundance of merit, which extends to all the maladies of our souls. The wounds of our pride are healed by the wonderful humility of Jesus Christ; the affected delicacy of our feelings, by the life of seclusion and of penitence to which he condescended to subject himself; our attachment to the goods of this life by that state of deprivation and of universal self-denial which he was pleased to undergo; our sallies of intemperate rage, by the meekness of the lamb which is led unresisting to our altars; our enmity, hatred, and desires of revenge, by the function which he here continually exercises, of mediator and conciliator; our irreverence and indecency in his temple, by the profound adoration which he here renders to his Father; that crowd of distractions which assails us in the house of prayer, by the supplications which this powerful intercessor never ceases to offer in our regard. It is from the recesses of his tabernacle, more effectually than from any other situation, that he addresses us in these accents of consolation: ‘Come to me, all you that are heavily laden with the weight of your miseries, and I will relieve you.’



It is a sacrifice in which all the members of the church militant participate, whatever be their condition in life, whatever be the nature of the duties they fulfil. It is from this inexhaustible source that the minister of the gospel imbibes the spirit of the priesthood; the warrior, intrepidity in the field; the prince, the wisdom of administration; the magistrate, the true spirit of the laws; the merchant, uprightness and probity; the artizan, activity and perseverance; the spouse, gentleness and love; the father, vigilance; the child, docility; the virgin, purity and Christian modesty. In all the fierce conflicts which the church maintains against the enemies of her faith and her morality, it is here that she holds in reserve those arms that protect her under their most violent assaults: hence it is that her martyrs derive their fortitude under torments; her confessors, liberty in the profession of their faith; her doctors, light to instruct their flocks, and confound the presumptions of heresy; her penitents, humility and contrition; her faithful children, in every state of life, a spirit of fidelity to accomplish her precepts: hence it is that the heart and the mind are filled with vivifying grace; that the passions are subdued, the inclinations changed, and the desires of the heart rectified: here, in fine, it is, that Jesus Christ renders himself all to all, and, like the presiding soul, breathes spirit and animation through all the members of his mystical body.

It is a sacrifice in which the church triumphant

in heaven likewise bears a part; not, indeed, in that sensible, exterior, and visible manner, which is suited only to creatures like ourselves, but in that real, efficacious, and ineffable participation, by which this oblation which sanctifies us, and has already purified them for bliss, confirms them immutably in their happy state of innocence and sanctity. This sacrament is also termed the bread of angels, the food of the elect, because they are filled in heaven with the bread that sustains us here below, and share, without interruption, in the immortal banquet which is our consolation in this vale of tears. Hence it is that the church derives the most noble of her privileges, for every time she offers the sacrifice, and distributes the sacrament, the smoke of this oblation ascends up even to the throne of the Eternal; the canticles of earth resound through the regions of eternity, whence arises a concordance of supplication, a communion of prayer and adoration, which associates earth to heaven, the region of exile to the land of promise, these scenes of sorrow and of combat to the realms of victory and of triumph; while the lamb that was immolated, from the foundation of the world, is, according to the expression of the well-beloved disciple, the light which at the same moment enlightens the terrestrial Jerusalem and the city of the living God. Thrice happy the Christian, who, penetrated with these sentiments, feels conscious that he is adoring in company of the angels, and praying while encircled by the elect; that he is seated here below at that

banquet, which in heaven is the object of their everlasting felicity !

It is, moreover, a sacrifice of refreshment and expiation for the church suffering in purgatory ; which, though deprived of the consolation of offering it with us, yet enjoys the benefits of this salutary oblation. The Almighty prefigured in the old law his merciful designs towards these souls, when he ordained that the priest should take two doves, and that the blood of the one sprinkled on the head of the other should be the sign of its deliverance and liberty. Every day does the blood flow from our altars, even to the place of their penitence ; every instant does some happy soul, purified by this expiatory effusion, wing its flight to the realms of everlasting repose. Meanwhile, those whom the hand of God still retains there, cease not to address us in tones of tender solicitation ; ‘ Have pity on us, have pity on us, at least you our friends ;’ now is the time to give us a real proof of your sensibility and compassion. Regard our sufferings, but not with that fruitless compassion which weeps over the unhappy, without affording them succour in their distress. Lo, your victim—your deliverer, and ours awaits you on the altar ! It is there that you may open for us the fountains of the Saviour, whose purifying waters will extinguish the flames that consume us, allay our burning thirst, wash away our remaining stains, and render us objects of compassionate regard to a God, who, though he still regards us with an eye of justice, yet can-

not forget that we are his children, and that you are our brethren.

We shall now proceed to show that every thing is holy in the oblation that is offered on our altars : holy, as to Him who is the subject of the sacrifice ; holy, as to the motives that determine it.

God is the end of this sacrifice ; it is to him alone that the whole homage is referred, and all holy, almighty, and all infinite, as he is by his nature, this is a homage worthy of his Godhead : in these august mysteries he receives a homage of perfect dependence, a homage complete in every requisite qualification, a homage infinite in reparation and gratitude on the part of the creature.

It is a homage of perfect dependence—the holiest among the children of men, the first-born of the predestinated, the chief of the elect, consecrates himself in this sacrifice to the service of his Father, in the name of all those whom he has associated to himself in quality of members, of brethren, and of co-heirs, in the same kingdom. Hence it is, that Jesus Christ, in the institution of this sacrifice, calls the blood which he there sheds the blood of the new covenant, since by virtue of this blood, man renders to God all that is due—But why do I say all that is due ? he renders him still more ; for had man persevered in a state of innocence, God would have required no other homage and sacrifice at his hands, than what was suitable to a being, imperfect in his nature ; he would have required from him the homage of a pure and faithful heart, for its more

exalted feelings would have been confined in the narrow limits that circumscribe the virtues of a finite creature. Here the oblation is boundless in its scope, and the merit of the victim immeasurable in its efficacy. When Jesus Christ saluted his eternal Father with an ‘*Ecce venio*: Behold I come!’ Methinks he thus seemed to address him; ‘Behold in me the utmost homage that a creature is capable of rendering; a mind, whose whole thoughts are centered upon thee; a heart that exerts its affections to fix them on thee alone; a will, whose whole powers are devoted to thy obedience; a body which exerts its faculties only to immolate them to thy glory; what canst thou require of man, which may not be found in myself? It is to thee that man owes the first homage of his heart, and ere time yet began, I had said to thee, ‘Behold, I come!’ It is to thee that man owes the most perfect return of love; it is a feeling that should be extinguished only with his life; and the homage of my heart is perpetuated with unremitting ardour, from age to age, and shall have no other term than eternity.’ Will not the Almighty accept this in his justice, not only as an acknowledgement of our absolute dependence, but also as the most complete reparation of all our outrages against his Divine Majesty?

Yes, however vast the extent and terrible the consequences that enlightened theologians have attributed to sin; though it be an article of faith that our offences, however circumscribed by the

will of the offender, become infinite with respect to the object they have outraged; still we may place an entire and unbounded confidence in the victim that is immolated for us, because the merits of Jesus Christ are more than paramount to the utmost malice of sin. Man can offer no outrage, however heinous, to any one attribute of the Almighty, which Jesus Christ does not meet with a peculiar expiation, proportioned both to the magnitude of the offence, and the sanctity of the offended. I know that our sins are marked with a character of ingratitude, of injustice, and infidelity, which strikes immediately at the sanctity, the justice, and the mercy of God; I know that they immediately counteract the wisdom of his Providence; that every time our heart abandons itself to their controul, it renews the impious attempt of the rebel angels, and grasps with its feeble efforts at the throne of the Eternal: but I also see with confidence, that in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, all these attributes are included in the inherent rights of the Redeemer. It is there that God exercises upon man, in the person of his Son, that sovereign dominion, that absolute empire, which belongs to him; while, at the same time that the rigour of his justice inflicts upon him the punishment due to sin, his mercy, boundless in its extent, provides his offending creature with a never-failing means of returning into grace and favour.

It is here also, my brethren, that the many instances of our hard and unthankful conduct are re-

paired by a homage of gratitude the most full and efficacious. If God condescends not to accept the victims of our choice or providing, it is because his infinite fulness cannot be contented with the offerings of our miserable insufficiency. What do we possess that we have not received from him? And what can we render to him which is not by a thousand titles already his? It is from the treasures of his own superabundance that he draws the ransom to satisfy whatever is due on our parts; it is from this fund that his inventive charity supplies us with the eucharistic victim; that offering of reconciliation and favour, which alone is sufficient to correspond to those immense benefits, those inexhaustible graces, which have flowed upon us, and shall continue to flow in such lavish profusion. Yet, however inexhaustible the source may be whence these blessings flow, that from which we derive the means of acquitting this vast debt of gratitude, is not less copious nor less abundant. As often as we take the chalice of salvation, and unite our prayers with those of Jesus Christ, the perpetual intercessor, we are confident that our offerings and our homages fulfil the whole extent of our obligations: and on what is this confidence founded? on what, but the infinite sanctity of him who offers the sacrifice.

It is Eternal Wisdom that has made choice of the victim; it is Eternal Charity that has consummated the sacrifice: it must, therefore, be necessarily worthy of the God to whom it is offered. That state of astonishing humiliation, to which Jesus

Christ has reduced himself on our altars, diminishes no part of his perfections, despoils him of no portion of his attributes, deprives him of none of those rights which are inseparable from his divine nature. He is still the splendour of his Father; he still continues the object of his divine complacency, his well-beloved Son, as he has been from all eternity. United to sinners, yet separated from their iniquities; covered with all the wounds of our transgressions, yet exempt from all our weaknesses; resembling us in all things, yet raised infinitely above us by his divine essence; condescending to become our brother, without ceasing to be the son of the Eternal, he presents every motive to animate our confidence, every attraction to win our hearts, and in this wonderful condescension of his son, the Almighty beholds all that can claim his pity, or engage his love. How can the Supreme Being reject a victim, who, without any usurpation, can claim an equality with himself; a holocaust, which the angels are commanded to adore, a sacrifice, of which the ancient oblations were but so many types and figures? Oh! were it permitted us here below to penetrate with the eyes of faith the veil that conceals this adorable Mediator, what a spectacle should we behold on the altar, at the moment the priest pronounces the hallowed words that operate this ineffable mystery! The well-beloved disciple has described nothing, in the prophetic volume of his revelations, comparable to the wonders that would here meet our view. The names of Jerusa-



lem, and of the city of the living God; the marvellous descriptions of this city, whose walls were transparent as crystal, and whose gates were resplendent with precious stones, were, I may venture to assert, but so many unsubstantial shadows, compared to the splendour of this ravishing spectacle. We should behold the son of the Eternal, environed by that innumerable host of happy spirits who proclaim his triumphs, offering to the divine Majesty his obedience to expiate our rebellious ingratitude, his humility to confound our pride, his patience to quiet our murmurs, his tears to extinguish the flames of our unlawful passions, his sufferings to subdue our sensuality, and his blood to wash away our iniquities. But, on a subject like this, silence would be most expressive: our faltering tongue betrays its incapacity to describe so stupendous a mystery; the heart may feel, but the lips cannot utter what it is for a God to be offered to a God! For a God to be delivered up for sinners, and to become the ransom for sin! He who wishes, in this imperfect state, to penetrate into the sanctity of this mystery, must judge of it by its effects. It is with this view that I proceed to show that it is a sacrifice, holy as to the motives that determine it.

These motives were known long before the accomplishment and consummation of this mystery. David had foretold that mercy and truth should meet each other, that justice and peace should form a mutual alliance; and Daniel, beholding this sa-

crifice in a nearer and brighter vision, predicted that the abolition of sin, and the establishment of the reign of justice should be the blessed effects of this mystery.

The abolition of sin is, therefore, the first advantage that we are to seek. When we present ourselves before the altar of Jesus Christ, we carry thither our personal infidelities, and those of the people. We offer them to God, through Jesus Christ, as a victim of anathema. The groans of our heart, if sincere, and the spirit of penitence and contrition, if unfeigned, may, in some respects, be compared to the weapon by which the victim is slain, and the charity of Jesus Christ to the fire that consumes it. We shall observe, my brethren, in the course of these instructions, that sin is often mentioned in the prayers that compose the liturgy; that God is everywhere solicited to turn away his eyes from our iniquities, and to fix them upon the faith of his church, and the sanctity of the victim; that he is entreated, not to regard the offences, the negligences, and the faults of the minister or the congregation, but to listen with mercy and compassion to their humble petitions. With whatever reverence and recollection we may approach the altar, our dispositions will be always insufficient, unless we bring to this sacrifice a mind filled with a lively sense of the heinousness of sin. The greatest insult that a sinner can offer to this mystery of love, is to assist thereat with a heart that is hardened, and that glories in its want of feeling. The

outrage is, in some degree, continual, since Jesus Christ never ceases to offer himself up for the destruction of those very iniquities which the sinner incessantly renews. The sinner, by the correspondence which he keeps up with the enemy of all justice, opposes the establishment of its reign, while the important purpose for which Jesus Christ immolates himself upon the altar, is to substitute eternal justice in the place of iniquity:—in other words, justice, which had heretofore been banished from the earth, has established for herself a perpetual asylum in the sacrament of the altar, that he who earnestly seeks after justice, may not seek her in vain. Let us not, therefore, hope to find her in any other place, not even in the society of men in appearance the most irreprehensible; you will find that there are some ties that still link them to the universal corruption; that however solicitous they may have been to purify themselves from the leaven of sin, this leaven, according to the apostle, has communicated to the whole mass an impression, which it is impossible for unassisted man to destroy. But we have a Holy of Holies, like that which sanctified the tabernacle of Israel; yet different from that of the Israelites, ours is not inaccessible to the people; all may enter therein by faith, which is the veil that conceals it from our eyes; all may participate of this eternal sanctity, if not in a way that is perfect here below, at least in a manner proportioned to the degree of our fervour and of our necessities.

Let us, therefore, like Daniel, become the children of desire; and what he uttered in the spirit of prophecy, let us pronounce in a spirit of prayer; may eternal justice reign for ever amongst us; may it establish its empire in our hearts, by reducing our will to perfect obedience, by subjecting our flesh to its spirit, and our passions to its laws; may it be established in the bosom of families, and be there productive of subordination, of charity, and of peace. The sacrifice of our altars would produce these happy effects, if all who assisted thereat were feelingly alive to its spirit, and animated with the dispositions that it requires. Is it possible that Christians, who have been united to Jesus Christ, the source of all justice, who have had before their eyes the pattern of all sanctity, who have sacrificed at the foot of his altar every irregular affection, should ever suffer themselves to yield to the corrupted desires of their hearts? Ah, my brethren, beware of deceiving yourselves with the idea, that the little fruit produced among us by this sacrifice, is the result of any inefficiency in the victim; no, it is the natural consequence of the imperfection of our faith.

These truths, my brethren, studied henceforward with greater attention, meditated on with greater reverence, and, by the grace of God, practised with greater fidelity, will give us a more exalted idea of the venerable character of our mysteries. We shall no longer enter the temple with a spirit of dissipation and irreverence; we shall no longer assist

thereat with that indifference and disgust which dishonour the sanctuary, we shall no longer retire from the altar with the same relish for the world, and the same ardour after its pleasures and pursuits.

May it please thy goodness, O Lord, to form and to strengthen these desires in our hearts; it is from thee alone that we can learn the full extent of the honours paid thee in these mysteries, and it is thou alone that canst animate our hearts with that homage which alone is acceptable in thy sight. Vouchsafe to accept in union with the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the imperfect yet free oblation which we make of our inclinations, and of our whole will to thee, in order that we may become with him a holocaust worthy of thy gracious regard in time, and of thy mercy in eternity.—  
Amen.

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#### ON THE DISPOSITIONS SUITED TO THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

By faith Abel offered unto God a sacrifice exceeding that of Cain.—  
HEB. chap. xi. 4.

**T**HE mere letter of the law, when separated from its spirit, is death to him who practises it: the scripture, my brethren, offers us a striking example of this in the person of Cain; and experience, unhappily, confirms this truth in the conduct of the

greater number of Christians who assist at the sacrifice of our altars.

The first of homicides did not fail to offer the sacrifice pointed out by the natural law: he presented what was marked out as the matter proper for the holocaust. Cultivator of the trees which Providence had created for the subsistence of man, he offered the choicest fruits of these trees, and acquitted himself of an act of exterior homage, that served to mark his dependance. To have seen him engaged in this religious exercise, who would not have regarded him as a faithful adorer? But all the value and merit of this sacrifice were rendered ineffectual, because his heart was not right before God, and because, unlike his brother Abel, he walked not in innocence and simplicity.

During the hours of sacrifice, our temples are filled with sinners who resemble him: we cannot reproach them with neglecting the duties which the church prescribes; they repair with punctuality to the sacred rites; and although the greater part betray either an affected negligence, or a manifest indevotion, yet many there are who keep up the appearance of devout believers; but does faith—a pure and enlightened faith, a lively and active faith, a tried and unshaken faith, animate their actions, sanctify their duties, and consecrate their offerings? Does that spirit of preparation, which should dispose our souls to prayer, precede this action, at once the most holy and the most solemn that religion prescribes? It were, I fear, too flattering an

idea to suppose the majority of Christians animated with these dispositions; since, even among those who consider it as a duty to unite themselves in spirit to the sacrifice of the Mass, there are too many who are ignorant in what this spirit of preparation consists.

My brethren, let us apply ourselves to the study of the dispositions, which ought to precede that homage which a Christian presents to Jesus Christ in these tremendous mysteries.

Although the prayers which the church has added to her ancient liturgy, be not all of them essential to the sacrifice; although many of them can be considered only as preparatory to the oblation of the victim; though it may be said with truth, that the Christian, who enters into the spirit and the sentiments which they inspire, is truly prepared to offer the sacrifice; still there are dispositions which ought to precede the recitation of these prayers: and, as the church has charged her ministers not to appear at the altar, till they have duly disposed themselves, by entering into the different sentiments which their awful ministry requires, in the same manner is she equally solicitous that the faithful should not participate in their holy functions, till they have acquired the necessary dispositions. She does not, it is true, require indiscriminately of all persons, and under all circumstances, the same prolonged effusions of the heart; but in assisting at this sacrifice of propitiation, she exhorts all to a deep regret and detestation of sin,

joined to a firm purpose of avoiding and renouncing it in future—dispositions that will lead them to sacrifice on the altar of their hearts all those irregular affections which the holy victim is about to expiate by the effusion of his blood; she reminds them, that a victim of thanksgiving demands a heart penetrated with gratitude, sensible of proffered blessings, touched with benefits received, and disposed to profit by all the graces either promised, merited, or actually flowing from this great sacrifice; she gives them to understand that Jesus Christ, the universal intercessor, is pleased with such souls as are humbled under the weight of their miseries, impressed with a deep sense of their weakness, and feelingly convinced of their own unworthiness. Should the Christian, before his approach to the altar, be hindered, by the multiplicity of his occupations, from entering into all these sentiments, or making trial of their efficacy, at least religion would admonish him to keep his mind habituated to these happy dispositions, and more frequently to renew them, in order that he may not recite, without attention and advantage, the affecting prayers that precede the divine oblation.

It would be superfluous to place in the number of necessary preparations, a sincere confession of our faults, and a return from our infidelities: we shall have more than one occasion to show you, my brethren, that sin is, of all the dispositions of the soul, the most incompatible with the sanctity of this august sacrifice; that the more lively an



enlightened the faith of the Christian, the more sensibly he feels the necessity of presenting himself before the altar with purity of heart. St Cyprian speaks in high terms of commendation of the faith of those who deemed it reproachful to have assisted at the holy sacrifice, without making sometimes a public, but always a secret confession of the thoughts of discouragement with which the fear of persecution had inspired them. Though this practice be now discontinued, the same obligation of never approaching the altar, but with a deep and holy awe, and of bringing thither, in a spirit of humility, the whole weight of our infidelities, remains as fully in effect as ever. The word Mass signifies a *dismissal*: and thus the same term, that, from the earliest ages, has been used to distinguish this dread sacrifice, is also intended to remind us of the formal exclusion which the church pronounced against every scandalous sinner, and the law she imposed on the secret transgressor of not presenting himself at the altar, except in a state of innocence, if not perfectly attained, at least ardently desired, carefully sought, and faithfully demanded. I do not insist upon these rigorous canons of the first and purest ages of the church, but shall proceed to point out to you, my brethren, the different dispositions indicated by the various vestments that adorn the priest in the functions of his sacred office; and although the application of these different mysteries seems more immediately to affect the minister of the altar, yet may each faithful soul dis-

cover such lessons therein, as are applicable to his particular state.

‘ Look, and make these things according to the pattern that was shown thee on the mount ;’ such was the command addressed by the Almighty to Moses. After engraving with his finger on two tablets of stone the holy law destined for his people, God prescribed to this leader of Israel, the order of the victims, the arrangement of the ceremonies, and the figure of the ornaments designed for the decoration of the high-priest, and the ministers chosen either to assist him, or supply his place in the holy functions. The church seems to address the same admonition to the priests of the new law, when she subjects them to a particular form in the ornaments designed for the celebration of the sacred mysteries ; and as she attaches to each of these ornaments a spiritual signification, to remind the wearer of the dispositions which his venerable functions require, it is to this signification in particular, that she calls him to devote all his study and attention. The model she proposes herein is Jesus Christ, the great High-priest, who is invested with all the virtues of which these ornaments are expressive, and who ought to be their living rule to teach them to honour the vestments which they bear by the sanctity of their lives : ‘ Look, and do according to the pattern that was shown you.’ May I not pass from the priests to the inferior ministers, and from them to the simple faithful, and address them also in the same words ? ‘ Do

according to the pattern that was shown you—consider attentively the ornaments in which the church has arrayed those who fulfil, under Jesus Christ, the functions of priests and mediators : consider, that the view of them should be a living and embodied instruction to teach you that the duties of the priest and the people are the same as to the spirit with which each should be animated ; and that the virtues, whose necessity is inculcated even by the vestments of the church, must be of indispensable obligation to the faithful. Be ye, therefore, studious to enter into this spiritual-signification, and to regulate your lives conformably to the instructions therein conveyed. The priest begins by covering his head or shoulders with a kind of veil, which, according to the explanation given by the most ancient missals, represents the sackcloth of penitence, the use of which the prophets of the Old Testament so often recommended to the people. It is also a figure of the helmet which the warrior wears as a defence in the hour of battle ; the church alludes to this figure in the words which she puts in the mouth of the minister : ‘ Place upon my head, O Lord, the helmet of salvation, that I may be enabled to repel all the fiery darts of the wicked one.’ Ought not such to be the language of every Christian, who knows, that as often as he approaches the altar, it is to acquire fresh energy to resist the attacks of his enemy, and that here alone he can find a sure and unfailing protection ! Was not the helmet of salvation placed upon his head at

the moment of regeneration? Is there not a striking resemblance between the veil which the priest extends over the infant, and that with which he covers himself in these venerable functions? Let us say with him; 'O my God, when the enemy of salvation beholds upon our heads this sign of protection to us, and of terror to himself, which thine hand has placed upon our head, may he tremble at thy power, and respect those who are marked as thine elect; may his efforts to weaken our fervour, discompose our minds, sully our imaginations, and trouble our hearts, become in his hands so many weapons blunted by thy grace; and since this veil reminds us of the sackcloth and ashes which are emblems of the penitence of our hearts, may our spiritual enemy find us penetrated with the most salutary conviction of our sins, and the most heart-felt desire to avoid them in future.' But what will it profit the Christian to have his head humbled under the sackcloth of penitence, and his brow defended by the helmet of divine protection, if he still continues rashly to expose his body to the violence of his mortal enemy, and his soul to those deadly weapons that every instant menace its destruction?

The next vestment that the priest assumes is the Alb, a name importing its whiteness. This, in former times, was appropriated to such persons as held the most distinguished rank in the Roman empire, and was assigned in the old law to all who served in the tabernacle: the church has now con-

secrated it to the use of the priest, and those who administer to him at the altar. The decency of this garment should remind those who wear it of that gravity which becomes their state of life, and which tends to inspire the faithful with the respect due to their ministry ; its colour, too, should admonish them of that irreprehensible purity of manners expected in their character ; the very sight thereof should oblige them to imitate interiorly this perfect freedom from defilement. Thus, while the priest repeats ; ‘ Cleanse me, O Lord, and purify my soul, that, sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb, it may be fitted for the enjoyment of eternal felicity : ’ the people, penetrated with the same sentiments, ought to behold with confusion, with fear, and with grief, the immense separation caused between them and their God, by their boundless ingratitude and innumerable infidelities. We ought to pray for that purity of manners, that innocence of heart, that uprightness of mind and of conscience, which alone can render us irreproachable before the tribunal of the just Judge, and give us a sure claim to that kingdom, where nothing defiled can enter ; and since the altar is an image of heaven, and the bread that is offered thereon of the food of angels ; since the God whom we there adore forms the felicity of the blessed, and the Lamb that is there slain, is the Chief of the predestinated, let both the priest and the people consider it as a sacred duty to offer in this earthly paradise, and on this visible altar, such purity of con-

science as may be worthy of the sublime altar of heaven.

Nothing is indifferent or insignificant in a religion where all is spiritual. Even the girdle, which seems merely suited to the convenience of the dress, and is worn by all those whose garments are long and apt to embarrass them in their ordinary occupations; even this girdle presents both to the priest and people the emblem of a virtue as rare as it is precious. ‘Gird, says the minister, as he binds on this species of ornament—gird my reins, O Lord, with the girdle of purity, extinguish in my heart the fire of concupiscence, and may the flames of thy holy love consume every earthly affection, every thing therein that is unworthy of thee.’

Should there be any one at this awful moment, either among the ministers, or those who assist at the sacrifice, whose heart is not in unison with what his lips utter, how great the misfortune of such a soul! How humiliating the reflection, that while we draw nigh to the altar with impure and disorderly affections, Jesus Christ is the most perfect model of purity! That it is he who breathes into the virgin-heart the living flame of charity; that the canticle of the Lamb can be sung by those only who have preserved their original purity! If the church expresses her astonishment, in the words of St Ambrose, that he should not have disdained the womb of a virgin, though she was created the purest of all creatures; it must be a prodigy still more astonishing to behold this God of all sanctity

encompassed by sinners, devoured, in a certain measure, by impious ministers and sacrilegious Christians, and this without crushing them beneath the arm of his vindictive justice.

The Maniple, whose origin is lost in the night of ages, and which, as it rarely meets the eye of the faithful, presents no apparent object of edification, is, nevertheless, of all the sacerdotal ornaments, the one to which the church attaches a signification the most mysterious and instructive. The virtues it is intended to represent, are not in the number of those which the sanctity of the priesthood exclusively enjoins to the minister who wears it, and of which the neglect may be tolerated in the simple laity: ‘O Lord,’ says the priest, as he assumes this ornament, ‘O Lord, may I be found worthy to bear this Maniple of sorrow and affliction, that I may reap with joy the reward of my labours.’ If the labours of the ministry were the only ones prescribed to man; if the recompence were confined to these alone, this prayer, calculated as it is to animate the zeal of the ministers of the Lord, would offer no motives of emulation or confidence to the rest of the faithful; but since the general law imposed on all the children of Adam, labour and sorrow are become their indiscriminate portion. All are obliged to submit to this yoke, all are destined to experience its galling load; but, since Jesus Christ has rendered it light and easy, all may likewise promise themselves that divine sanction which lightens its pressure, and sweetens

its bitterness. It is worthy of notice, that the priest demands that as a favour, which has been imposed on man as a penance. He does not say ; ' Grant, O Lord, that I may bear it—or that I may be capable of bearing it ;' he prays that he may not be included in the number of those reprobates, of whom the prophet speaks, when he says, that a fatal exception—an unfortunate privilege has exempted them from the pain and labour imposed upon the rest of men : May I rather be reckoned in the small number of those whom Jesus Christ has associated to carry his cross, to mourn with him, and with him to labour in the work of his Father. Thrice happy, should this choice fall upon me ! Then shall I sow with the certainty of increase ; I shall labour with the assurance of reward, and the fulfilment of duty will be followed by the certainty of recompence. To these important reflections I might add all that enlightened writers have said respecting this species of ornament, and its ancient use. It seems that in the first ages it merely served for the convenience of the minister, when the sweat and fatigue of his ministry were excessive ; but now it is exalted into an emblem of the grace of Jesus Christ, which is always at hand to him who solicits it with humility, in order to strengthen him against the temptations that assail, and the discouragements that deject him ; it is truly the Maniple that wipes away not the sweat of his brow, nor the defilements of his body, but the pollutions of his soul ; every Christian, therefore,



should provide himself therewith by means of prayer, should employ it by his fidelity, and preserve it by his vigilance.

The origin of the Stole, would, I doubt not, furnish abundant matter for reflection, if we considered, that as early as the sixth age, the church had appropriated this ornament to the exclusive use of the higher order of ministers, and had forbidden it to the inferior clergy; and that it is a kind of distinctive mark which determines the portion of authority granted to those that wear it:—but an explication of the prayer which the church puts in the mouth of the minister as he arrays himself therein, will be the surest method of deducing such instructions as the ornament suggests: ‘Restore to me, O Lord, the robe of immortality which was forfeited by the prevarication of our first parents; and, though unworthy to celebrate so august a mystery, grant that I may attain to everlasting glory.’ In reciting this prayer, the minister forcibly reminds us of our primitive fall, and of our daily transgressions. He makes use of this avowal to interest the mercy of God, which is always touched with our miseries, when they are felt and acknowledged. By this disposition, too, the church seeks to inspire us with humility of heart, to make us sensible, that after the most diligent preparation on our part, there still remains an inherent corruption, which renders us unworthy to participate in these holy mysteries, and that after all, our only reliance must be upon the mercy and indulgence of

Jesus Christ. Indeed, which of us, however faithful in the discharge of his duties, would dare to use any other language than this,—‘ I am sensible of my own unworthiness, and it is only under a conviction of thy goodness, that I presume to approach thee in this most holy sacrament !’ It is easy to see that the church speaks not of that unworthiness which consists in a voluntary attachment to sin, still less of that sacrilegious unworthiness which lays violent and impure hands upon the adorable victim; she alludes to that kind of unworthiness only, which is known, felt, and, as far as human efforts can go, repaired by the sighs of a contrite heart, expiated by penitence, and healed by a perfect reconciliation. When well understood, and meditated on with attention, nothing can be more proper than this prayer to excite our hearts to that respect and confidence which we ought to bring to the foot of the altar. Respect—since it teaches us, that if the angels are not sufficiently pure in the sight of infinite holiness, a creature less perfect, and more frail in its nature, ought to carry thither the most profound conviction of its own misery. Confidence—since Jesus Christ disdains not to communicate himself to us, to be the support of our weakness, and in some measure the antidote against our corruption. Therefore, though not arrayed in the Stole which the minister bears, let every Christian manifest a laudable zeal to penetrate into the sentiments which it inspires; and, after entering with the priest into the spirit which

these different prayers breathe, let us array ourselves in the Chasuble, that is to say, in that mantle of charity which perfectly conceals from the eyes of God the multitude of our sins, or rather as it can conceal nothing from that eye which penetrates into the most secret recesses of the heart, presents him with the cross of Jesus Christ as the most proper motive to appease his indignation.

This vestment, which for the space of nine hundred years has been exclusively appropriated to the person of the priest, is marked with a cross. Therefore the church in the prayer which the minister recites, regards this ornament as a figure of the yoke of Jesus Christ: ‘O Lord thou hast declared that thy yoke is sweet, and thy burthen light, grant that I may carry that which thou dost now impose upon my shoulders in such a manner as to merit thy grace.’ It is, therefore, evident that neither the priest nor the faithful should confine their attention to the ornament, which is merely a figure; but to the spiritual crosses, the daily afflictions, the perpetual contradictions, to which we are liable from the condition of our nature. When we approach the altar, we should say of all our afflictions: ‘Grant, O Lord, that I may bear them with fortitude, and endure them with patience. Thou hast declared that thy yoke is sweet, yet nature exclaims that it is hard and painful; thou hast promised to lighten the burthens of those who really need thy assistance, and the weakness of my faith makes me ready to sink under the weight of

those which thou hast ordained for my share. Grant, therefore, that henceforward I may bear them with sufficient submission to attest my confidence, and merit thy grace.

This prayer, with those that precede it, are, in general, recited only by the priest ; it might perhaps be useful for every Christian, when circumstances, and the nature of his occupations would allow, to address the Almighty in terms that comprehend the substance of these sentiments. He would find nothing so effectual to animate his faith, and inspire him with a conviction that the least ceremony, the most insignificant practice of the church, is insignificant only in appearance, and would unfold, to the diligent observer, a fund of solid and useful reflections. Nothing passes unnoticed and unimproved by him who is animated by celestial charity. He beholds, in the varied ornaments that decorate the priest, a lively emblem of the various virtues that should adorn the Christian ; the view of the tapers that flame on the altar, in the midst of day, awakens the recollection of those times of obscurity and of persecution, when the church was obliged to conceal her awful mysteries and the secrets of her faith amidst the gloom of caverns and subterranean recesses ; the diversity of colours which the church assumes, according to the different objects of her devotion, represents the variety of those celestial attractions which render the spouse so beautiful in the eyes of her beloved : this diversity reminds him also of the peculiar virtues of the saint whose me-

mory we celebrate; of the spotless purity of the virgin, the ardour and courage of the martyr, the holy austerity of the penitent, the apostolic and productive labours of the pontiff; even the sorrows which nature dictates, and the tears that faith invites us to shed over the tombs of our brethren, are figured in the mournful attire with which she invests her ministers on the days appointed to celebrate their obsequies; the order of her solemnities, the different rites which she observes, the prayers which she recites, the instructions which she gives, every thing merits the attention of a Christian, and will serve as so many means to nourish his piety. If it were possible to dwell on each of these practices, a simple explanation would, perhaps, impose silence on many of those pest free-thinkers, who make a practice of blaspheming what they do not understand, of caviling at what they are not pleased to adopt, and of rejecting what they think proper to disbelieve. It would not be difficult to prove to such men, that the church, always wise, always uniform in her principles, continues equally sage and uniform in her conduct; that, very different from the spirit of incredulity, which possesses no surety, no stability, which veers with every wind of doctrine, and shifts from system to system, with the same facility that the mind wanders from thought to thought, she practises at this day what she practised in the earliest ages; that she still observes her ancient discipline in the same spirit, and still reaps the same advantages from its observance; and,

should the view of the varieties perceptible in her worship, tempt them to accuse her of inconstancy and indecision, I should feel no difficulty in proving that, though in conformity to times and circumstances, she may vary in the externals of her worship, her doctrine is still invariable.

My brethren, I have dwelt thus long on this subject, because I consider an explanation of customs, unknown to the generality of the faithful, as calculated to furnish you with an occasion of edifying them with useful instructions: I am persuaded that your piety, far from being wearied by these details, will feel its veneration towards these sacred mysteries renewed by these simple explanations. Let us, like docile children of the church, respect all her ceremonies, and observe all her commands: let us profit by all she proposes, and hope from all she promises: may humility prepare us for the oblation of the sacrifice, may penitence unite us to the offering, and charity immolate us with the victim; may vigilance ensure us the blessings of the proffered redemption, and perseverance crown us with its reward through everlasting ages. Amen.

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ON THE PRAYER OF THE PRIEST AT THE FOOT OF THE  
ALTAR.

Judge me, O God, and distinguish my cause from the nation that is not holy.—PSALM xlii, v. 1.

**E**VEN were the history of the first ages of the church silent as to the exclusion of notorious sin-

ners from any participation in the holy mysteries, these words employed by the church in the commencement of the sacrifice would be sufficient to prove the fact. They stand in legible characters at the very threshold of the sanctuary, to warn all those who follow the ways of iniquity, that the same indulgence which allows them to assist at the sacrifice of our altars, will not authorise them to profane it by their irreverence, and offer, by their hardness of heart, an insult to the victim of charity. No other than the just man, who has preserved his baptismal innocence, or the faithful penitent, whose crimes have been washed away in the blood of the Lamb, can join with propriety in these words of the prophet : ‘ Judge me, O God,’ not according to the rigour of thy justice, but by the laws of thy clemency. I glory in treading the narrow path which is opposed to the broad way of the wicked ; in all that thy law forbids, I fly their society and shun their connection ; I am anxious to incur no part of the anathemas which thou hast pronounced against their infidelities : ‘ Distinguish my cause from the nation that is not holy.’ Supported by the consoling testimony of a good conscience, the faithful soul is authorised to repeat with confidence ; I will ascend to the altar of the Lord ; I will enter his sanctuary and seek the joy of my heart, and the support of my weakness : ‘ I will go unto the altar of God ; to God who rejoiceth my youth.’

If sinners, my brethren, are unable to speak the same language, they may, at least, enter into the

sentiments most proper to produce this frame of mind. These prayers, with the others which we purpose to explain in this instruction, may be considered as preparatory to the sacrifice of the Mass; that is—when the priest and people have previously disposed themselves in secret for so holy an action, the church wishes to complete this preparation by her solemn and public prayers. Let us, therefore, be cautious not to lose the fruit of any of the instructions which this tenderest of mothers proposes for our improvement.

Before we enter upon an explication of this part of the Mass, I think it may not be useless to combat a prejudice which has, doubtless, been established by the tepidity and negligence of Christians. So strongly are men attached to the letter of the law which enjoins attendance at the holy sacrifice on days of obligation, that it has been asked at what part of the Mass it is necessary to assist, in order to satisfy the precept. This question has been often proposed, and as often satisfactorily answered; and though I am convinced that no one among my present hearers feels any uneasiness on this head, yet I consider it as a duty to furnish you with the proper arms to combat in others a laxity of conduct, of which I flatter myself you are yourselves incapable.

It is incumbent on us to attend at Mass on all those days which the church has set apart to honour the mysteries of our holy religion, and to celebrate the memory of the friends of God. The



precept is clear. It is equally clear as to the time and the measure of the duty : for to whom, I would ask, does it belong to appoint the prayers, to direct the formularies, and to prescribe the ceremonial rites that are to precede, to accompany, and to follow the holy mysteries ? To whom, but to that church which, under the guidance of the holy Spirit, consults utility in all things, and executes all with justice. If she has judged it necessary that preparation should precede, and thanksgiving follow the oblation of the holy sacrifice, which of us shall dare to pronounce these practices either useless or superfluous ? Thus, if we were asked, whether to be present in the temple at the moment of the oblation of the bread and wine, were not sufficient to satisfy the rigour of the precept—whether that be not precisely the time in which commences the sacred mystery representative of that consummated on the cross—whether, if perchance a person should enter at this part of the Mass, it would be necessary to wait till another minister renewed the holy oblation ? To such-calculating Christians I should confidently reply, that, in the command which the church has laid down, she has made no distinctions ; that, to render it a matter of obligation, it is not necessary that the particular prayer should belong essentially to the sacrifice ; that, if even the most absolute necessity be insufficient to justify the omission of any of the prayers, much less can we pretend to excuse our neglect in failing either to prepare ourselves with the priest, or to unite with

him in expressions of gratitude; in a word, that there is no point of morality which requires less discussion, because it is one of those on which a timorous conscience feels no hesitation in deciding.

We ought, therefore, to accompany the priest to the foot of the altar, in order to enter with him into the sanctuary; with him, likewise, we ought to commence this solemn act of religion by the sign of the cross, which is at once expressive of the mystery of our reconciliation, and furnishes us with the means of attaining it. It is called the symbol of a Christian—the visible mark by which he is distinguished from the unbeliever: we are taught by the church to employ it before each of our principal actions, but more especially before those that have religion for their object. At the same time we must not fail to sanctify therewith all our temporal occupations, and daily labours, remembering that it draws down those benedictions of heaven, without which nothing is perfect or efficacious, either in the natural or the moral order of things. It is with propriety, therefore, that the church makes use of this sign in the first of those prayers that compose the liturgy. This practice has also the sanction of the earliest antiquity. Jer-tullian and St Cyprian, two writers who lived immediately after the apostolical age, speak of this practice as a thing of constant and familiar observance. ‘We mark our foreheads,’ says the former, ‘with the sign of the cross.’ ‘At every action,’ says the other, ‘let the hand trace the sign of the

cross.' It may be regarded as a compendium of all the mysteries of our faith, as a homage rendered to the three persons of the adorable Trinity, as an act of gratitude for all that the Godhead,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, have condescended to do in favour of man. Let us, therefore, render this act of simple homage at all times, and in every place ; but particularly at that moment when his mercy is displayed in a manner the most signal and conspicuous.

The priest extends this sign from his forehead to his breast, which is the usual, but not the only method employed by the church. It is sometimes confined to the brow, on which, in some sort, is formed that mysterious *Tau*, that character of divine election which is one day to distinguish the friends of God from the objects of his wrath ; it is also made upon the mouth, in order to remind us of that guard which, according to the advice of the prophet, we ought always to keep upon our lips, that no expression may escape us contrary to the honour and reverence that are due to our Maker ; it is formed likewise upon the breast, in order to banish from the heart every disorderly affection, every dangerous inclination, every motion of the will that rises in rebellion against the appointments of heaven. But the sign which precedes the oblation is of a more extensive kind, in order to remind the Christian that his offering should be as complete as his indigence will permit ; that at least he ought to unite all his faculties, to

consecrate all the energies of his soul, and all the powers of his heart to bless, praise, and pour out his gratitude to the Author of all good, for the abundant blessings communicated in this sacrifice. This first action, therefore, should be accompanied by a spirit of adoration ; and it is in this spirit we should repeat with the priest ; ‘ I will approach to the altar of the Lord.’ This verse, with the whole psalm from which it is taken, is repeated alternately by the priest and his assistant in order to remind the people of their obligation to unite with him not only in mind and in heart, but also in the recital of the same prayers, or at least of such prayers as bear the nearest relation to the object that engages the priest at the altar. I say the *nearest* relation, without entering at present into particulars, as I shall hereafter have occasion to dwell, more at length, on the best method of hearing Mass, and I hope to afford such satisfactory information on this important point, as will leave no doubts on the subject. I merely intend this as a passing observation addressed to such of the faithful as, not being able to read, are obliged to recite vocal prayers. For, whatever may be the forms of prayer employed in unison with those of the liturgy, a constant attention to the action of the priest is necessary, in order to maintain the due relation between these particular forms and the prayers appropriated to the sacred oblation.

I invite such as are desirous of entering into the spirit of the psalm with which the Mass commences,

to meditate on it occasionally in private, and to enter into the sentiments which the prophet experienced at the time he composed it, that every word of this holy canticle may be a sincere expression of the same dispositions that animated his heart on approaching the altar of the Lord.

This psalm is followed by the Confession which both the priest and assistants make of their sins; for which purpose the same formulary is employed which is used by the faithful in the sacrament of penance, to dispose them to a faithful accusation of their sins. This confession is still more necessary as a preparation for the sacrifice of the new law, since it was required by the Almighty even in the sacrifices appointed for the children of Israel. The high priest, when he offered the public oblations; the inferior ministers, when they sacrificed victims to heaven for their particular necessities, as well as the Israelites themselves, when they presented their offerings—all were obliged, by a formal precept of the law of God, to avow their offences in words to this effect: ‘I have sinned: I have committed injustice:’ Yet these sacrifices were but so many shadows of the great atonement, so many barren signs of the future reconciliation, to effect which the saving victim is immolated in a real and efficacious manner on our altars. Let us, in a tone of heart-felt contrition, express our grief in these words: *I have sinned, I have exceedingly sinned; I am sensible of my ingratitude, I acknowledge my manifold infidelities, and bewail, in the bitterness*

of my soul, the grievousness and the multitude of my offences.

This prayer is first recited by the priest, because it is he who should set the example of these happy dispositions, who should encourage his people, and testify, by the groans of his heart, that he stands in need of the same indulgence which he solicits for others. The confession is repeated by the people, in order to establish between the minister and the congregation a sort of concert, a kind of unison, both of sighs and of tears.

Alas, my brethren, how different this concordance from that which is heard in heaven ! There the happy spirits bend in extatic adoration before the dazzling glories of Omnipotence, and exclaim : Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth ! Here a crowd of miserable sinners fall prostrate before the tribunal of their judge, and cry for mercy ; I have sinned, *through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.* Oh, gracious Lord ! I will add with thy prophet : Thou art softened at the view of our sins, because the grief of thy church is proportioned to the multitude of our offences.

Yes, without doubt, this confidence is well founded ; and, if all the ministers, who offer this sacrifice, did but present to the Lord, in unison with their congregations, hearts penetrated with compunction and grief ; if we could apply to the steps of the sanctuary the emphatic expression employed by the scripture in recording the place where Israel acknowledged and lamented its offences—that it is

truly the place of tears—the Almighty would assuredly listen to our cries, would wipe away our tears, and never dismiss us from his altar, without the consoling assurance of our perfect reconciliation.

But, alas ! perhaps an habitual repetition of this prayer has filled both the minister and the assistants with that supineness and indifference which extinguish this feeling in the heart. Let us examine our conduct with candour and impartiality, and acknowledge, that as often as we have prostrated ourselves at the foot of the altar, and said : *I confess to Almighty God*—in other words—I accuse myself, in presence of Almighty God, of all the injustice of my past life ; that as often as we have done this without being sincere in the deposition made against ourselves, without feeling that deep detestation which should accompany it, we have braved his anger, and insulted his justice. Ah ! my brethren, have we ever seriously reflected, that God may one day condemn us, not only from the testimony we have borne against ourselves, but also from that of all the saints whom we invoke in this prayer ? A virgin who never knew the defilements of sin ; an arch-angel who triumphed over the chief of the rebellious spirits ; a saint who was the friend of the spouse, as being the enemy of sin ; two apostles who were both sinners, and both illustrious penitents, from whose contrition and tears we may learn that mercy is the recompence of sincerity alone ; a multitude of saints, who are indebted for their triumph over sin to the sacrifice we are about to of-

fer; but, above all, a church which, though sometimes prophaned by its unworthy members, is always pure and spotless, as becomes the chosen spouse of Christ:—it is in presence of this assembly, of this church both of heaven and earth, that we confess to our shame—perhaps to our eternal confusion: *I have sinned, I have exceedingly sinned!*

I say to our eternal confusion—for if these expressions are uttered by a cold and languid soul; if the heart is still insensible to the heinousness, still enamoured of the charms of sin; if the constant repetition of the same avowal adds nothing to the vigour of our resolutions, or to the fervour of our desires, may I not say of such a soul, what a saint pronounced respecting all those who recite their prayers without faith and without attention: That they make a mockery of their God, by uttering sentiments, and pretending to feelings, to which the heart is a stranger?

Let us dwell upon a reflection, which is so well calculated to awaken our hearts to the sentiments inspired by this prayer, and to serve as an antidote against our natural insensibility. If our piety is defective, we shall find that this deficiency may, in general, be traced to the negligence with which we make our first approaches to the victim of propitiation; that if this oblation has been hitherto unproductive in our regard, we have nothing to accuse but our own langour and dissipation of mind. Let us henceforth—that is, from the first moment we present ourselves at the altar—let us say of our



insensibility, as of all the other faults of our life: I *have sinned, O Lord!* It is *through my fault* that thy sacrifice has so often proved ineffectual in my regard: it is *through my fault* that thy adorable blood has not purified my soul from the shameful stains of sin: it is *through my most grievous fault* that this most holy of sacrifices, this most awful of mysteries, has found me without faith and repentance; this most powerful means of salvation, without fervour and zeal; this most extensive of benefits, without gratitude and love. Before thee, O my God, I confess it: and may this sincere avowal, which the liveliest grief inspires, be followed by a speedy forgiveness, and a lasting reconciliation. When we consider these words of the apostle St James; ‘Confess your sins one to another; and pray one for another, that you may be saved,’ we shall find that such is precisely the practice of the church in the prayers which are the subject of our present instruction. This mutual confession is made both by the priest and the people—all recite the prayer which contains an avowal of the sins of which all are guilty, and this formulary is followed by reciprocal wishes, whose object is to draw down the mercy of God.

We should never forget, that of all the dispositions with which we should approach the sacrifice of the Mass, contrition of heart is the most essential. The very solicitude of the church, in consecrating so many of her prayers to this particular object, is a sufficient proof of its importance. She

wishes to impress us with an idea, that in proportion to the patience, the benignity and the love which Jesus Christ displays in this mystery, the greater should be our awe, the more profound our humility, the more perfect our distrust of ourselves; that a state of grace and sanctity is not requisite for the minister only, and for such of the assistants as actually receive the sacramental communion, but is also a matter of indispensable obligation to all those who spiritually participate therein; so that if we approach not in a state of grace, either as yet unforfeited by sin, or repaired by subsequent repentance, at least we ought to bring a heart that cherishes the first sparks of divine love, and is filled with an ardent desire to feel them enkindle and burst into a perfect flame. Penetrated with these truths, let us continue to follow the church through the prayers which she recites by the mouth of her minister.

Both the priest and his assistants supplicate the mercy of God: they, therefore, acknowledge their unworthiness, and express their conviction that it is not by any title of justice, nor by reason of any personal merit, that they are admitted to a participation of this awful mystery, but, that whatever Jesus Christ is about to operate in their favour, is the effect of a compassion altogether gratuitous. They, likewise, acknowledge that the remission of sin is an essential effect of this sacrifice—an effect which Christ has been pleased to render conditional, and entirely dependant upon a sincere avowal of

our transgressions. After this avowal, we naturally repeat at the altar : ‘ May the Almighty, and most merciful God, grant us absolution and remission of our sins :’ In fine, we acknowledge that this victim of propitiation is also a pledge of a blissful immortality, since the prayer terminates by this reciprocal wish, ‘ May he bring us to life everlasting !’

Therefore, my brethren, let a mutual charity animate our bosoms, when we repeat this prayer ; let the flock unite in a fervent demand for the pardon, absolution, and remission of the sins of their pastor, persuaded that the success of his ministry depends, in a great measure, upon the dispositions which he brings to the altar. True it is that Jesus Christ, in spite of the unworthiness of his minister, can and actually does operate in the heart these mysteries of mercy ; yet of what importance in his eyes, and of what utility to the congregation is a worthy minister, whose heart and whose lips have been purified by the flames of divine charity ! Whatever be the petitions offered by him in the name of the people, they will all be heard, provided they are sanctioned by the justice, guided by the spirit, and conformable to the views of Jesus Christ in this sacrifice. It is, at the same time, of no less consequence to the minister, that the faithful who assist at the same rites, should possess hearts animated by this spirit of charity, and invested with this character of justice. Prostrate at the foot of the altar, and uniting in the same language, let both the one and the other exclaim in the same

spirit, and with the same confidence: ‘ O Lord, cast a look of compassion upon us: then shalt thou enliven our hearts, and thy people will rejoice in thee—Show us, O Lord, thy mercy; and grant us thy salvation—O Lord, hear my prayer; and let my cry come unto thee.’ It is by these short and energetic expressions, that the priest terminates the prayers that have detained him at the foot of the altar. Their introduction into the church is of very ancient date, and their conciseness is perfectly conformable to the precept given by our Lord, when he instructed his disciples in the duty and the method of prayer. He enjoined them to avoid the diffuse and ostentatious discourses of the Pharisees, which extended into elaborate harangues. ‘ When you pray, speak not much,’ was the simple precept of their divine Master. These short effusions of the heart are easily retained by the generality of the faithful, and may be daily employed by them under their different necessities: It is with this view that the church repeats them before almost all her prayers.

The priest now ascends to the altar: the language he at this moment holds, is perfectly conformable to the dispositions which the preparatory prayers were calculated to excite. His sins and those of the people are the constant subject of his thoughts; and their remission and forgiveness is his constant demand. He ceases not to acknowledge that purity of heart is the first disposition which this sacrifice requires. ‘ Take away from us our iniquities,

we beseech thee, O Lord, that we may be worthy to enter with a pure mind into the Holy of Holies.' This prayer, scarcely ever recited by the generality of Christians, is, I fear, still less frequently made the subject of meditation. And what is this purity of mind, which the priest demands both for himself and the assistants? What, but a mind enfranchised from the bondage of the passions, and detached from every dangerous affection; a mind endued with docility and with faith, which believes without reasoning, cavilling or contradiction, everything that revelation has disclosed and the law of God enjoins; a spirit of vigilance and fidelity, which is actuated with a sincere desire of discharging every duty, and fulfilling every precept; a spirit of fervour and of piety, which is moved by gratitude, and inflamed with love; a spirit of contrition and humility, which acknowledges its own baseness and unworthiness. Such is the spirit which the priest enjoins, which Jesus Christ requires of those who encompass his altar, and which every Christian should attain by prayer, and cherish by the good desires of his heart. These dispositions were well-known to the royal prophet, when he said; Lord, who is worthy to dwell in thy tabernacle, and to rest upon thy holy mountain? He, whose ways are pure and irreproachable; he, who is faithful to accomplish all justice. Let us, therefore, fly more than death itself, whatever can exclude us from the sanctuary, since it is no less than death to be separated from it; and a death still

more terrible to enter therein, without the robe of justice and purity. Let us, therefore, never cease to exclaim: Have mercy, O Lord, have mercy on us, and purify our hearts from every stain of sin.

When arrived at the altar, the priest varies not his language: a fresh conviction of his sins renders him still more solicitous to insure his pardon, and to reject every degree of confidence in his own merits. With this view, he adds: 'We beseech thee, O Lord, by the merits of thy saints, whose relics are here, and of all the saints, that thou wouldst vouchsafe to forgive us all our sins.' The priest bends as he repeats this prayer, and kisses the altar while in the act of invoking the saints. The church never ordains a ceremony, without attaching thereto a spiritual sense, and by these different actions of the priest, she reminds us of the necessity of humility and confidence. By the union of these two virtues, she wishes to suggest a remedy for that excess which they are apt, when not acting in unison, to produce in such souls as are deficient in sound knowledge and instruction. The priest ascends to the altar, in spite of his unworthiness, and speaks nothing but the mingled language of confidence, of contrition, and of fear; while in this bending posture, he presents the image of a suppliant, of a criminal unworthy to meet the eyes of his Judge. Such language, and such an attitude, must always appear natural and well-suited to the sinner; nor are they unsuited to all those who par-

ticipate in the same sacrifice. But since we are not to suppose, either in the one or the other, that voluntary and sacriligious unworthiness which is the result of obstinate wickedness and hardness of heart, the priest is admitted to kiss the altar, which is an image of Jesus Christ; then, with a confidence tempered by humility, he ventures to rank himself in the number of the friends of the spouse, of the guests destined to sit at his table, of the ministers consecrated to his service.

Never let the indifferent and lake-warm Christian forget, that this honourable place is destined for those only, who are sensible of their unworthiness; that to be present in the temple, to assist at the celebration of the holy mysteries, regardless of the miseries of his heart, unmoved by any sense of his infirmities, or distrust in his resolutions, untouched with awe at the majesty of the Godhead who is about to be immolated upon the altar, is a most flagrant abuse, and repugnant to the very spirit of the sacrifice. But let the timid Christian take courage; let him be assured that daily failings, when vigorously combated, and sincerely detested; that weaknesses, which are always inevitable, yet always repaired by the exercise of Christian virtues, may, when we approach the altar, be converted into motives of sorrow and humiliation, but never of discouragement and tepidity; that God, all holy as he is, notwithstanding the implacable hatred he bears to sin, notwithstanding the incompatibility of his justice with our iniquities,

has placed this sacrifice between himself and us, in order that he may draw near to his offending creature, without compromising either his sanctity or his justice, and that we may approach to him without offering an outrage to his infinite holiness and sanctity.

This prayer, my brethren, concludes the first part of the Mass, which we term the Preparation. Before we enter upon a farther explanation of the other parts of the liturgy, it will be well to unite, under one point of view, all the reflections which this first part suggests.

We have distinguished two kinds of preparation, the one individual and secret, the other public and common to all the faithful. The first regards, in a special manner, the ministers only; they alone are obligated to the recitation of such prayers as the church has appointed for this purpose: but the laity are not, on this account, dispensed from entering into the sentiments which these prayers express; there is a species of preliminary preparation, which every Christian should consider himself bound to make, in order to dispose himself in a proper manner for hearing the holy Mass. What I mean is this—that a feeling of profound respect, of adoration and of gratitude, should, in some measure, prepare his way to the altar; for, if he approaches without any previous preparation, it is impossible that both his mind and heart should be instantaneously collected, and assume such dispositions as the sacrifice requires.



The second preparation consists of the prayers which the priest pronounces at the foot of the altar. To join in these prayers with negligence, is, of itself, reprehensible; but to absent oneself from them, without sufficient reason, is altogether dangerous; insomuch so, that under an infinity of circumstances we are exposed to a breach of the precept of hearing Mass, when we presume to dispense with this part of it under pretext that it does not appertain to the essence of the sacrifice. In the same manner I must extend this reflection to such, as though present in body, have their hearts and minds estranged from the sentiments which the church inspires in these prayers.

This introductory part commences with an invocation of the adorable Trinity. The sign of our redemption already announces the effect which the sacrifice is intended to produce, and from this moment the priest speaks of nothing but his sins and those of the people; he has no other object in view than mercy and indulgence. In his person, too, we behold a lively image of the true Isaac, laden with the wood for his sacrifice, and ready to ascend the place of immolation; all covered, in the eyes of his heavenly Father, with the sins of which he is about to be both the victim and the representative, and penetrated with the idea of that rigorous justice which leaves no sin unransomed and unatoned, yet not forgetting, at the same time, that ineffable mercy which abandons not the sinner to discouragement and despair. Whence comes it,

therefore, that the habit of assisting at ceremonies so awful and so august, should render us insensible to their meaning and their spirit? Why does not our heart, from the very commencement of this sacred action, melt, according to the expression of the prophet, and entirely dissolve away like wax before the flame? Could those holy women, who from the gates of Jerusalem beheld the Saviour ascend the hill of Calvary, could they have witnessed a more interesting spectacle than what presents itself in this first circumstance of the Mass? The scene was doubtless more sensibly affecting in the former instance, because external objects make so deep an impression upon carnal minds; but regarding Jesus Christ in these two situations with the eyes of faith alone, I must say, that he appears more worthy of my admiration and my love at the foot of the altar, than at the foot of Calvary. There, he was about to consummate, in a single oblation, the redemption of his chosen people: here, the oblation is perpetuated without pause or interruption. There, the daughters of Jerusalem saw nothing but the meekest and the most amiable of the children of men sacrificed to the brutal rage of his enemies: here, I behold Jesus Christ inviting me to accompany him to the place of his sacrifice, laden with my cross, and bearing all my sorrows; at once the security for my ransom, and the price of my redemption. There, the people of Israel beheld nothing but an object of horror and dread; in vain they had heard from the lips of Jesus, that he who

wished to be his disciple, should take up his cross and follow him: To ascend with the Saviour to Calvary, would have been to expose themselves to the danger of sharing in the horrors of his sacrifice; it was this apprehension that kept even the apostles at a distance from their Master: here, on the contrary, every thing is full of encouragement and assurance; there is nothing appalling in the spectacle that meets our eye, nothing revolting in the bloodless victim that is immolated, nothing cruel in the sacrificing priest, nothing that outrages the feelings in the people who participate therein; I can, therefore, exclaim in good earnest with the spouse in the canticles: Lord, when thou ascendest to the altar of thy love, draw me after thee; to thee I fly, allured by the odour of thy perfumes; that is to say, by those virtues of which thou hast set me the encouraging example: O be thou pleased to establish them firmly in my heart! May fear, humility, and contrition, conduct me to thy love, and this love to the eternal enjoyment of thyself. Amen.

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#### ON THE KYRIE ELEISON.

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am infirm and weak.—Psalm xl.

**T**HIS short and emphatic expression, *Have mercy on me*, is often employed in the sacred writings; it is a sentiment perfectly natural to the man who is impressed with a feeling conviction of his own mi-

sery, and of the mercy of God. The church makes constant use of it in her prayers; it is one of the first that she addresses to God before offering the sacrifice, and this language is become so familiar, that every one, when in danger or trouble, is induced to exclaim; *Lord have mercy on me!* But vain and unprofitable is the exclamation, if the words are repeated without the sentiments that should accompany them. Upon whom, says the Almighty by the mouth of his prophet, upon whom shall I cast a look of mercy and compassion, but upon him who feels his misery, and believes himself truly poor without my saving aid; upon him, who is covered with confusion, and whose heart is ready to burst at the view of his transgressions; upon him, who meditates with attention upon my statutes and my judgments, and who is penetrated with that salutary fear which my words should inspire. What would be the answer, were we honestly to interrogate our heart as to the dispositions which have hitherto accompanied this prayer? Often have we repeated with the priest, often have we chaunted with the church; *Lord, have mercy upon us:* but, little attentive to the sense of these words, we have, perhaps, recited with thoughtless indifference a prayer the most adapted to inspire sentiments of compunction and sorrow.

My brethren, let us consider the antiquity of this prayer, and the motives which still induce the church to retain it: this part of the Mass demands your most serious attention. It is more especially

designed for prayer, and is composed of the Introit, the Kyrie Eleison, the Gloria in Excelsis, the Dominus Vobiscum, and the Collect. These prayers will furnish matter for three different instructions. I have only a few words to say on the Introit, or the entrance of the priest to the altar.

This prayer is composed of certain verses selected from some psalm, which always bears a reference to the different mysteries, or other objects which the church proposes to our veneration. At solemn Masses this psalm is chaunted by the choir, whilst the priest, at the foot of the altar, is reciting the preparatory prayers. The minister himself recites it on ascending to the altar. The entire psalm was formerly recited, in alternate response, by the two divisions of the choir; it was even repeated many times over, and on this account it is, that after the homage of praise that is rendered to the most holy Trinity in the Gloria Patri, the same verses that formed the Introit, are a second time repeated. Some churches still retain the custom of thrice repeating it on occasions of particular solemnity: this custom corresponds most exactly with the purport of the prayer, the principal object of which is to put into our mouths, and still more into our hearts, some of those lively sentiments with which the coming of the Messiah inspired the saints of the Old Testament. Like them, let us, in this part of the Mass, raise our minds in fervent expectation that the heavens will open and rain down the fostering dew that is to

fertilize the earth. A fervency of desire is, therefore, an essential disposition that should accompany this part of the Mass, whether we chaunt the psalm with the choir, or recite it with the priest.

The choir, in the same manner as the priest and his assistants at low Mass, repeats three times alternately the *Kyrie Eleison*. These are three Greek words that signify, *Lord, have mercy on us*: this prayer, so full of mystery, is almost as ancient as the church. It was used in the first ages with a view to draw down upon the Cattlehumens a supply of grace and of heavenly benedictions. The church has, on different occasions, made a change as to the time, the manner and the variety of the recitation. At one time she repeated it after the Gloria in Excelsis, and at other times she left it at the discretion of her ministers, either to prolong or abridge this form of prayer. She often repeated, Lord, have mercy on us, the same number of times as the words, Christ, have mercy on us. It is her present practice to repeat this invocation nine times, in order to imitate, say the mystic authors, the nine choirs of angels who laud, without ceasing, the greatness and the mercy of God. Thrice the church repeats Kyrie Eleison, in honour of the Father, the first person of the adorable Trinity; thrice the Christe Eleison, in honour of the Son; and by the three last repetitions of the Kyrie, renders the same homage to the Holy Spirit. The Trinity and the unity of persons are wonderfully well expressed in this formula—the unity, since each invocation is

particularly made three times, to intimate, that it is impossible to honour the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, without honouring the perfect nature which these three personages possess entire and without division ; she honours the Trinity, by a special and particular invocation of the three persons that are really distinct from each other.

This prayer, as being in some sort a cry of the heart, the lively expression of a soul groaning beneath the weight of its miseries, is chaunted in a high tone of voice ; let the varied repetition of this prayer, therefore, inspire us with a salutary dread of not being favourably heard. A practice prevails in the church, which is fully expressive of the object of its institution ; it is a circumstance which may, till this moment, have escaped you, and yet it is well worthy of your attention. At the celebration of high Mass, the choir commences in a very low tone the first of these invocations ; but in proportion as they advance the tone is raised, and these last words, *Lord, have mercy on us*, generally burst from the united choir in loud tones of expressive melody. How important would be the result, if the energy of our sentiments increased in proportion to the increasing elevation of our voices, so that each of these invocations should add something to the fervency of our desires ! The blind man of Jericho has set us the example ; the more they sought to impose silence on him, with the more ardour he exclaimed : ‘ Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me ! ’ Like him, let us restrain

every wandering idea, and banish every importunate distraction that seeks to divert us from the duty of prayer; and should they continue obstinately to assail us, let us summon all our courage to resist them; when we see the enemy approaching, let this be our watch-word: *O Lord, have mercy upon us!*

The woman of Canaan has taught us the value of this prayer. When, in order to make trial of her faith, Jesus Christ seemed to reject her prayers, she still perseveres, and continues to repeat, with increasing ardour; *Lord, have mercy on me!* Her perseverance was crowned not only with the favour she demanded, but also with other testimonies of his kindness, that far exceeded her most sanguine expectations. Let us imitate her faith: the more the justice of the Almighty compels him to be silent in our regard, with the greater confidence should we raise our voices, and, penetrated with our unworthiness of all the favours we solicit, should place all our confidence in the dignity of him by whom we address ourselves to the Father: *Christ, have mercy on us!*

My brethren, let us give this prayer all the extent of which it is capable; in repeating each of these separate invocations, let us see if we cannot excite our fervour by an application thereof to the principal attributes, which each of the three persons of the adorable Trinity exerts in our regard.

I invoke God the Father as my Creator, and repeat with the royal prophet; *O Lord, I am the*



work of thy hands, thou knowest the dust from which I was taken ; thou knowest the baseness and the frailty of my nature ; thou knowest all my faults, and all my transgressions : I feel them myself, for when I wish to raise myself to thee, a powerful weight draws me back to the earth, and renders me incapable of making any thing like a worthy oblation either of prayer, of homage, or of gratitude ; a heavy yoke, according to the expression of one of thy servants, galls the neck of thy miserable creature, it behoves me, therefore, to cry out from the depth of my misery and corruption : *O Lord, have mercy on me !*

I invoke God the Father, as my protector and preserver. I acknowledge that I was called into existence by a miracle of his love, and that it is by an unremitting display of this miraculous goodness that I am preserved from again returning into my original nothing. I am aware that my life is threatened with continual dangers, that every thing, both within and without me, is pregnant with the seeds of destruction, and that if his benediction were not imparted to the air I breathe, and to the food with which I am nourished, I should find nothing therein but disease and death ; that if his powerful hand did not give support to every thing that is above my head, and stability to every thing beneath my feet ; if it did not ward off the countless ills that threaten my existence, I could not survive for a single moment the innumerable perils that surround me. But, in the spiritual order of things,

I behold an effort of his protecting power, still more inestimable, since it interests my soul; still more beneficial, since its effects extend even to eternity: and as the frail vessel of my heart is every moment in danger of losing the precious gifts of grace, as the enemy is lurking to betray, and so many dangers threaten around, ought I not to cry out, in all the consciousness of my peril and weakness: *O Lord, have mercy on me!*

I invoke the Father, in quality of a father—that tender and endearing character which he has been pleased to assume in our behalf: a character—the very name of which is to me a title of confidence, and to him a motive for commiseration. He is my Father: to him my necessities are known, to him my prayers are presented; to his eyes the simple preparation of my heart is clearly revealed. He is my Father; but I, alas, am but a stubborn and ungrateful son, a disobedient and unnatural child; for how often have I abused his graces and his mercies, contemned his precepts and advice, rejected his counsels and inspirations! He is my Father: and under this title it is that he chastises me by afflictions, and quells my proud spirit by humiliations; what am I, therefore, but a rebel, since I so often revolt, by murmurs and complaints, against the hand that seeks to correct me? Ah, if I were penetrated with a salutary conviction of the whole injustice of my conduct, I should never repeat, with sufficient ardour and sensibility, this emphatic expression; *O Lord, have mercy on me!*

I invoke the Son, in particular at the moment of the sacrifice, as a High-priest chosen from among men, who, as he was invested with our nature, was acquainted with all its infirmities; as a High-priest of infinite mercy and compassion, who had no need of making an offering for himself, or of soliciting pardon for his own sins, but who has made the sins of his people, in some degree, his own and personal transgressions, in order, with his infinite sanctity, to make a full atonement for the infinite malice of sin; as a High-priest, separate from sinners, yet living in the midst of them, conversing with them, and sharing in all their miseries, without participating in their corruption. Such is he, whom I invoke as the Christ, the anointed of the Lord, and from whom I pray, with fresh earnestness, for mercy and indulgence: *O Christ, have mercy on me!*

I also invoke the Son, in quality of a victim: a victim that for so many ages had been expected to supply the place of those carnal victims, which were unable to effect man's reconciliation; a victim in whom alone all those merits are concentrated, of which former sacrifices were but so many unsubstantial figures; a victim in whom were, at the same time, united all the properties of propitiation, of expiation, of the recovery of favours lost, and of thanksgiving for benefits received; a victim from whose superabundance our deficiencies are amply supplied, and our vast obligations effectually requited; therefore, even though I should present myself at the foot of the altar, in the most absolute

need of every thing that could insure the acceptance of God, yet in Jesus Christ I find a rich fund of such offerings as must find favour in his sight, such objects as are most effectual to move his compassion, such merits as are most capable of securing his favour—and it is the application of these merits that I solicit in this comprehensive prayer: *O Christ, have mercy on me !*

I invoke the Son, under the character of a brother ; not indeed as one of those jealous and haughty brothers, who, proud of their birth-right, regard their own blood with disdain, and grasp, with insatiable avidity, the inheritance of their common father : the brother whom I have received by the sacrament of adoption, disdains not to address me under this appellation ; he blushes not to hear me salute him by this title, he condemns not the right that I assume of calling God my father, and of styling myself the heir of his kingdom, and the co-heir of his Son : he is the first-born, the chief of the predestinated, the presumptive heir of all things ; but he seems jealous of these titles, with no other view than that he may share them with me : animated by such a display of condescension and love, let us exclaim, with the most lively confidence: *O Christ, have mercy on us !*

I invoke the Holy Spirit, as the sanctifier of my soul. From the moment that his unction had impressed on my heart the seal of adoption, the ineffable treasures of divine grace were opened to me, and the plenitude of the gifts of God was poured

forth in the sacrament of confirmation; I never performed one single good work, available to salvation, of which he was not the operative principle; I never entertained one single good thought, which he himself had not previously formed in my heart. Every good desire of the heart, every well-regulated motion of the will, is from him: the very flames that consume the divine victim on our altars are drawn from the bosom of his eternal love. O spirit of sanctity, of charity, and of wisdom, consume my heart with this victim, which is immolated as a whole burnt-offering for my offences! Purify me from all the dross of my passions by the flames of thy holy love; soften this flinty heart by the active fire of thy charity! Enliven this languid—inflame this frozen bosom; and let these prodigies of love be so many proofs of the compassion which I solicit in this prayer: *O Lord, have mercy on me!*

I invoke the Holy Spirit as my guide and counsellor. It is from him I should seek for advice in all my undertakings, and for certainty in all my doubts. It is by the light of his wisdom alone that I can discern what is just, what is holy, what is commendable; only this can preserve me from dashing my foot against the stone of scandal and offence; only this can enlighten my steps, and turn them from the ways of iniquity. Possessed of this wisdom, I can confidently repeat with the prophet: I am accounted wiser than the aged and experienced; I am better instructed than those who have been teachers of the science of salvation, but

have failed to practice the truths they taught. Therefore, the more profound my ignorance, the more confined my knowledge, with the greater ardour should I exclaim: *O Lord, thou God of all wisdom, have mercy on me!*

In fine, I invoke the Holy Spirit, as the spouse of my soul: Yes, in this land of exile, in this state of long and forlorn widowhood, where I am separated from that Spirit who should be my perpetual consolation, it is a signal favour to receive, from time to time, the visits of this divine Spouse: and of all those tender communications, the most affecting, without doubt, is that which I enjoy at the moment of the sacrifice, when the Spouse is about to form for himself a new church, a holy progeny; souls that are regenerated, and hearts that are renewed with love. Ah, could I but have the happiness to participate in this consoling renovation! O Thou Divine Spirit, may the sacrifice which is about to be offered in my behalf, renew in my soul a faith, which the darkness of error shall never obscure; a hope, which neither the goods nor the evils of life may ever be able to shake from its firm foundation; a charity, whose ardour may never experience the langours of indifference towards God, the stings of resentment and malice against its neighbour, or the feelings of coldness and negligence in the discharge of its duties. O divine Spirit, manifest towards us the tenderness and compassion of a spouse who fondly sympathizes in all our weaknesses: *O Lord, have mercy on us!*

My brethren, to a Christian of enlightened faith and animated charity, these short reflections will be sufficient to suggest the dispositions that ought to accompany this prayer, and the advantages that are to be derived from its use:—these advantages are no less than the habitual assistance of God's grace in time, and the enjoyment of his glory in eternity. Amen.

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#### ON THE GLORIA IN EXCELSIS.

Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.—St. LUKE, ii. 14.

**T**O the voice of prayer the church also associates the accents of praise. The whole object of the present prayer is to render homage to him who condescended to become our victim in the sacrifice of the Mass. This canticle, part of which was intoned by angels, while the remainder is claimed by the different fathers of the early ages, is repeated throughout the whole church, forms a part of the preparation for the sacrifice, and is well calculated to inspire the minds of the faithful with an exalted idea of the majesty, the sanctity, and the wonderful charity of the victim that is about to be offered for their ransom.

It is not my present intention to enlarge upon each separate expression of this sublime canticle, for I know, my brethren, that such an explanation may be found in many of your books of piety; but,

following the plan marked out in these instructions, I shall dwell upon the motives that should render it valuable in our eyes, and create a desire of being more intimately acquainted with its spirit. But, in discharging the different duties of the divine office, let us be particularly cautious not to suffer the constancy of the repetition to degenerate into mere habit and routine ; not to bring a mind filled with distraction, and a heart with apathy, to the practice of duties so proper to awaken our faith, and enkindle our love.

It is not easy to ascertain the precise time when the church introduced this prayer into her liturgy, yet we have no difficulty in discovering her motives for reciting it before the celebration of the holy mysteries. Many authors trace it back to the apostolic ages, but the greater part are of opinion, that the custom of reciting it in the Mass was introduced in the second age. But it was not limited to this particular occasion : we see that pious females were invited to place it in the number of those prayers that formed their morning devotions, doubtless, as being the most proper to remind them, on their first awakening, of that happy morn when the angels appeared to the shepherds of Bethlehem to announce the birth of their deliverer. And why, I may ask, has this custom been abolished ? Would it not be highly conducive to the advancement of piety, if families were to resume this form of prayer, or at least to dwell upon it with particular attention at the season which the church has consecrated



to the memory of this sacred event? Perhaps this holy practice might induce the faithful to meditate with more profound attention upon a prayer, whose every expression tends to renew our love and gratitude towards Jesus Christ. This, indeed, is the important object which the church had in view when she introduced it among the prayers that compose the preparation to the sacrifice; and the more strongly to fix the attention of the faithful on the august mysteries which it contains, she required, for more than eight hundred years, that the bishop alone should have the privilege of reciting it; the simple priest had no right to join in these preparatory prayers; it was only by special permission that he enjoyed that privilege. Its use was afterwards extended to all in full orders; some principal festivals, those of the nativity and of the resurrection, for example, being alone excepted. At last the church gave a general permission that as often as the priest approached the altar, he might, in the name of all present, address the Almighty in a prayer, so well calculated to excite our hearts to the dispositions which this sacrifice requires.

But as this canticle breathes nothing but holy joy, the church wishes it to be omitted on days of penitence—days, that are appointed to remind us of the warfare that Jesus Christ continually wages against sin, and of that which we after his example should constantly maintain against our passions, by mortifying our senses, and reducing our appetites under obedience. On days like these, she deems it incon-

sistent to speak of that peace which is continually disturbed by the rebellion of sin, and of that glory which is constantly tarnished by its defilement. And yet, have we ever thought of making this a subject of penance? Is our ardour in reciting this prayer, such as to make us feel grieved at the privation? Have we ever wept at seeing ourselves forced to be silent respecting the gracious attributes which Jesus Christ displays in our regard? When the church interdicts this prayer, should we not in justice regard ourselves as children disowned by an offended father, and forbidden to display those external marks that characterize us as his children?

When we behold the priest elevate his hands at the recital of this prayer, let us raise our hearts to heaven; let our souls aspire to those regions of bliss towards which he raises his eyes; and when he unites his hands as if to grasp the proffered inheritance, let us embrace in desire the good things of eternity! Such is the spiritual sense of the ceremonies that accompany the recital of this prayer, such is the idea, we are taught to form of the sacrifice that is about to be offered, by these first words of the canticle; *glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will.* This union, effected solely by the sacrifice of the Messiah, is the accomplishment of that memorable prophecy of David, when wrapt into future times he exclaimed; ‘Mercy and truth have met each other; justice and peace have kissed!’ It is in the sacrifice, now on the point of being offered, that this union,

this sacred alliance is rendered effectual, by the reparation of the outrages which sin had offered to the majesty of God, and by the abolition of those fearful anathemas which his justice had launched against offending man. Here the insulted honour of the Almighty is requited by the obedience of his Son ; the humility of Jesus is accepted as an atonement for our revolt, and an ample reparation of all our negligences. It is here, that man may find peace in the union with his God, which this sacrifice renews ; in the victory over his passions, which this sacrifice procures ; in the possession of his God, of which this sacrifice gives him the consoling assurance.

But let us never forget, that it is to *men of good will*, and to those alone, that these blessings are promised :—to men who come to this sacrifice with a will firm in its resolve to detest the malice, to avoid the occasions, and to repair the outrage of sin ; with a will, entirely divested of that love of self, which, according to the expression of St Bernard, is the active cause of our ruin ; with a will that is humble, and distrustful of itself, that places no reliance on those wayward desires, those unstable resolutions, which are excited in a moment of fervour, and destroyed by the first temptation.

This canticle, therefore, is suited only to the true children of peace : it cannot be unreasonable to deny the use thereof, to hearts torn by the storms of the passions, and slaves to the tyranny of resentment and every criminal desire ; the hearts and

minds of such as repeat it must be in unison with this prayer; they must have silenced the cries of a guilty conscience—that voice of death, that testimony of reprobation which sin has placed as a faithful monitor in the heart.

But what do I say? From the earliest ages this prayer formed a part of the Mass of the catechumens, and in the days of her greatest severity the Church never denied to the sincerely penitent the consolation of uniting themselves to the minister who recited it; this was done both with a view to their present instruction, and to give them to understand upon what title they were one day to participate in the oblation of the propitiatory victim. It therefore becomes every sinner who recites it, to mourn over the many outrages he has offered to the honour of his God, and to study to regain that peace of mind, which sin has discomposed; it behoves him to humble himself before the Lord, and acknowledge that nothing but a perverse and corrupted will has dragged him into the abyss of iniquity; he should solicit that upright will, which, according to the apostle, always disposes us to what is good, renders us conformable to the will of the Almighty, and inclines us to seek that only which is pleasing in his sight.

The slightest reflection, my brethren, will convince us, that the homage of sinners, animated by these dispositions, is perhaps of all others the most affecting, the most agreeable to God, and the most conformable to the ends of the sacrifice: their ho-

mage is united to that of the just, who adore, praise, and bless, who glorify, render thanksgiving, and form a concert worthy the God to whom it is addressed ; it is also united to that of the angelic choirs, who first intoned this hymn and set us an example of praise ; to the church who perpetuates it, and to the victim who gives this prayer all its value and efficacy.

O most gracious Lord, we praise thee, in as much as thou hast caused thy justice to give place to thy mercy ; and hast condescended, of thy good pleasure, to enlighten those who walked in the shadow of death, and to impart vigour to such as languished under the burthen of their infirmities ; we praise thee, in as much as thou drawest towards thee all those whom sin had banished forever from thy presence, and above all, that knowing the inefficacy of all the sacrifices that were before offered to thy name, thou didst thyself provide an offering fully adequate to the whole malice of our offences. Accept, O God, this tribute of homage, of which thou art at once the principle and the end :—*We therefore praise thee, O Lord !*

With thee we also bless and adore Him who came in thy name to be our priest, our victim, and our king. We adore him under the name which he has borne from all eternity, because it is ineffable ; we bless him under that which he deigned to take among us, because it is a name of confidence and of mercy. We bless, not the day of our birth—a day of woe and of malediction—but that of our regenera-

tion, on which he enrolled us in the number of thy children, and accounted us as the sheep of thy pasture, as the heirs of thy kingdom, and the associates of thy glory : It is but just that our lips should incessantly exalt and celebrate the author of so many benefits :—*We therefore bless thee, O Lord !*

We adore thee in unison with those blessed spirits whose language we borrow : and although thy Son, in assuming our nature, abased himself beneath these his creatures, yet in him we adore that Eternal Word which was made flesh in time ; thine image, which was invested with the figure of sin ; the splendours of thy glory, which were obscured by the infirmities of our nature ; thy supreme wisdom, which became the object of contempt and derision. But this wonderful and mysterious humiliation cannot hide thee from our view ; we recognize thee under these veils, and address thee as the tenderest of Fathers, who hast so loved the world as to give thy only begotten Son for its ransom ; and to thee, thou generous and adorable Son, who didst voluntarily deliver up thyself for offending man ; as also to thee, thou Spirit of charity, who dost enkindle that flame of pure love, which is to consume this victim of mercy ; *we adore thee, O thrice blessed Trinity !* Glory and honour, dominion and power be to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb that is immolated upon our altars. To this living and life-giving victim we offer our canticles of praise, desirous to glorify him by our works here below, until we are admitted eternally to glorify

him in the abodes of bliss. We glorify him because by death he has vanquished death himself, he has crushed the powers of hell beneath the weight of his cross, and washed away our iniquities in his precious blood : we glorify him as the author of every good, and the inexhaustible source of all grace and merit ;—under all these considerations, *we glorify thee O Lord !*

Such is the homage of a heart deeply impressed with the value of benefits received, and desirous of making a return of gratitude adequate to the greatness of the obligation ; and how numerous soever these benefits may be, the return of gratitude on our parts is adequate, since it is supplied by a victim of infinite merit : a God is offered to a God ; the holy of holies is presented to the Eternal ; we are under no apprehensions of seeing our offering rejected or our thanksgiving despised : with confidence therefore we approach to *give thee thanks for thy great glory !* Thou art the Lord God, the king of heaven, the Creator and preserver of all things, alone powerful, alone immortal ! and we are about to offer unto thee, Him whom thou hast made the partner of thy glory, because he is God like thyself ; Him, whom the prophets entitled the king of glory, because he reigns with thee ; He, who shares with thee qualities of a parent, inasmuch as he brought us forth upon the cross ; He, who equal to thee in power, commands our wills, regulates our affections, and governs our whole hearts. Thine eternal and only begotten Son is at the same time

invested with the twofold character of our Saviour and thy High-priest, of our victim and thine, of our brother and thy Son. It is in consequence of his assuming this title—a title so endearing and so capable of exciting our confidence, that we presume to address him, no longer alarmed and disheartened at the view of our past transgressions, with which he is charged : *Thou, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us !* It is in consideration of his being our brother, that we present our prayers through him, without whose mediation they would be held in abhorrence : —*Thou who takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.* It is in consideration of his being our brother, that we presume to raise our eyes to thee, and solicit thy merciful benediction : —*Thou, who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us !* O Jesus, our brother ! united to thee by the same nature which, by thy incarnation, thou hast wonderfully exalted in dignity, we acknowledge one only that is holy, and that one is thyself—for *thou only art holy* : enrolled as the members of thy kingdom, we obey but one only master, and acknowledge but one supreme jurisdiction—for *thou only art the Lord* : as the source of all greatness, as the origin of all justice, we adore none other than thyself—for *thou alone art the Most High !* O, divine Saviour, sanctify us by the virtue of thy cross, and admit us to that blessed abode, where we shall for ever contemplate the ineffable Trinity, *in the glory of God the Father !* Amen.



## ON THE DOMINUS VOBISCUM.

The Lord is with thee.—LUKE, i. 28.

**S**UCH was the annunciation of the angel Gabriel to the blessed virgin; such is the salutation which the church puts in the mouth of the priest, when he addresses his people. Indeed, the ministry which he fills at the altar, is in every respect similar to that which this celestial spirit was commissioned to exercise in his message to this most perfect of creatures: like him, my brethren, our ministry places us between God and man, to represent to God the necessities of his creatures, and to manifest to the creature the will of his Sovereign Lord: like him, we announce, that the Word, which was once made flesh, is now become our daily nourishment; that the Holy Spirit is again to descend with all his graces, and overshadow our altars; and that, like the bosom of the virgin-mother, our hands are about to bear him whom the angels adore. Like the angel Gabriel, it is the moment of recollection and prayer, that we choose for the delivery of our divine embassy; for it is immediately before the prayer called the Collect, that we address this salutation to the people: *The Lord be with you.* Though few in number, these words are pregnant with instruction. Accustomed to hear them uttered by the priest, and perhaps to answer him through habit, have we ever seriously reflected on what he promises us on the part of God, and what we in our turn solicit for him? Favour me with your pious

attention, while I enter upon an explication of this prayer, and add such reflections upon the ceremonies that accompany it, as may serve to convey some idea of the spirit in which the church invites us to the practice of all Christian virtues.

The apostle, St Paul, writing to the Ephesians, and wishing to give them a testimony of the most tender and paternal charity, thus addresses them : ‘ My brethren, may the grace of Almighty God, the love of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.’ Could he have expressed in a more feeling manner the lively interest that he took in their salvation ? In the same manner a mutual interest should prompt the priest to exclaim at the moment of the sacrifice ; *The Lord be with you* : and the people, to return that just and appropriate answer ; *And with thy spirit* : This is a duty that religious gratitude inspires. Of all the prayers which the church has consecrated in her offices, this is the most frequently employed, as being the most useful, though unfortunately the most neglected.—I say the most frequently employed, for it is not only in the celebration of the holy mysteries that she uses this invocation ; in each of her sacred offices the minister repeats these words both before and after the concluding prayer. The Mass being the most solemn act of religion, it is repeated in many of its different parts, while the ceremonies that accompany it, are admirably well calculated to give us an idea of its spirit. Placing himself in the middle of the altar, the

priest inclines forward, and kisses the place on which the sacrifice is to be offered ; he then turns towards the people, and with extended arms, utters that fervent wish ; *The Lord be with you.* Each of these circumstances has its particular object, which is worthy of your attention. It is from the centre of the altar that this benediction is pronounced, as that part is, of all others, and in so many respects, the most holy, and the source from which the graces of heaven flow in the greatest abundance : by this action he seems to say ; ‘ From the fulness of my heart, I wish you the fulness of the gifts of God ! ’ He bends to the altar, because he, who is destined to impart a blessing to others, must first draw down by humility the benedictions he is to communicate. He kisses the altar, which is an emblem of Jesus Christ, and seems, by this action, to testify his longing desire to draw from the fountains of the Saviour that salutary water, which is to spring up to life eternal. He turns towards the people, because this prayer is a salutation :—a salutation far more solid and sincere than those empty and unmeaning congratulations which are constantly in the mouths of worldlings, because it is the dictate of genuine charity, and has the true blessings of eternity for its only object. The priest extends his arms : this action, which in social life is the natural expression of warm and unfeigned affection, is particularly suited to the minister of the altar, who, acting in the name of Jesus Christ and of the church which he represents, sustains in this

holy function the endearing character of Father of the whole congregation. After the prayer, he joins his hands, to represent that union of charity, by which all our hearts are formed into one with that of Jesus Christ, in the same manner as he forms but one body with all the members that compose his church.

The manner of reciting this prayer is nearly the same throughout the whole church. Sometimes the whole assembled faithful return the salutation. Certain religious orders, and all the bishops of the West, instead of *The Lord be with you*, substitute the words, *Peace be with you*. The response is always the same on the part of the people: yet few Christians think of attending to this distinction, while all are ignorant of the reason for such a change. This custom is founded upon the circumstance, that, in the first ages, the bishops alone were privileged to repeat the *Gloria in Excelsis*. In this canticle, peace is announced to men of good will; and in reference to these expressions of peace, and animated with the spirit of the canticle he has just concluded, the bishop turns to the people, and salutes them with the words; *Peace be with you*. However, as the wish expressed by the priest in these words; *The Lord be with you*; fulfils the same views as the other, I shall content myself with pointing out the utility of the latter prayer.

Its utility is evident, my brethren, whether we consider this invocation as separate from the oblation of the sacrifice, or as forming a part of the

prayers that compose the Mass. If regarded as distinct from the liturgy, what else is requested in this mutual wish than the most intimate union with God? *The Lord be with you*: that is, may he sanctify by his presence every place you frequent; grant you the assistance of his grace in all your undertakings; defend and protect you by his providence, from all the dangers to which you are exposed; soften by the unction of his loving-kindness all the trials and adversities you are doomed to undergo; and from the stores of his never failing bounty fulfil all the desires of your heart: may his patience overlook, and his indulgent mercy pardon all the sins you have committed, and may he heap upon you with a liberal hand, the genuine good things of eternity—those objects that alone are worthy the vast desires of the soul! *The Lord be with you*: with you in the midst of temptations, to bring you off triumphant in the contest; with you in your doubts and perplexities, to enlighten and dispel them; may he be near you in prosperity, to direct you how to use it aright; in adversity, to soften its grievances; in your labours, to crown them with success, and in your losses to repair them with increase! May he be with you in your houses, in the midst of your families; may his protection be every where sensibly felt, and his graces be showered in profusion upon you souls; may he be with you as a tender father who loves his children; as a friend, who directs, comforts, and consoles him whom his heart loves; as a physician who counteracts the

malady and effects its cure. Should he sometimes come as a judge to condemn, or as a ruler to chastise, may his justice be tempered by mercy, and his rigour by clemency ! May he be with you ; not by the mere omnipresence of his divinity, which is common both to the just and the unjust, and which, to those who abuse it, will stand as a mark of terrible chastisement ; but with a benign and gracious presence, with that presence in which he reveals himself for the consolation of his elect. May he be with you, but above all may you, by an effort of his grace, be always with him by attention and devotedness of mind ; let your hearts be often raised towards him ; let him be the object of your thoughts, and the end of your projects and undertakings. Be you always with him, by the affections of your heart ; love him alone, seek him alone, aspire after him alone, to him alone refer all your wishes, your designs and your actions. Be with him, by the habitual homage of your body, whose every action, motion, look and expression, should tend to his glory and to your sanctification. Such is the manner, in which we should act up to the spirit which the church breathes in this short, but emphatic prayer : *The Lord be with you.*

Such is the efficacy of this prayer, even when considered unconnectedly with the relation it bears to our main subject ; but it is our present intention to consider in it a more extensive point of view, by examining how far it is applicable to the sacrifice of our altars, which is the immediate object of our

present instruction. Turning towards the people, the priest exclaims : *The Lord be with you* ; we shall find that he employs the same salutation, as well before he begins prayer, as before the oblation of the sacrifice and the consummation of the communion. As if he addressed them in language to this effect :— May the spirit of God rest upon you during the time of prayer : that spirit of fervour and of piety ; that spirit of zeal tempered by humility, and of fear intermingled with confidence ; that spirit of compunction and repentance, which always renders this prayer efficacious in the mouths of those upon whom it rests.

These words are again repeated before the oblation of the sacrifice : *The Lord be with you* ; may he be present to receive the offering of propitiation we are about to present to his divine Majesty : may he be present as the saving victim that alone can impart a true value to the oblation we make in his name ; may he be with us as our High-priest, to unite our petitions with his infinite merits, and to efface, by his ready obedience, the reproach incurred by our innumerable rebellions ; to repair by the sincerity of his homage, the hypocrisy of our pretended service ; to atone by the sanctity of his nature for the corruption of our own.

Lastly, these words precede the communion : *The Lord be with you*, at that auspicious moment, when he so ardently desires to unite himself to you, and declares that it is his delight to dwell with the sons of men : may he be with you more especially,

who really participate in this divine food, but let it be in a more permanent and durable manner ; may he be with you, not only by the presence of his body, his soul and his divinity, but also by increasing your faith, strengthening your hope, and by rendering more active the flames of charity ; may he be with you, to be your daily bread, the constant viaticum of your earthly pilgrimage, and the faithful adviser in your daily undertakings. And you, who by reason of your multiplied imperfections, perhaps of your scandalous disorders, are unhappily excluded from a participation of this holy sacrament, may he be with you, at least by disposing your heart to holy desires, by inspiring you with a detestation of sin, by establishing you in a firm resolution of avoiding all the occasions of evil, and of expiating your past offences.

I scarcely need remind you, that the answer which the people make to the priest is expressive of the same good wishes, and even of others more extensive: for the more holy his office, the more solemn his obligations, the more numerous his duties, the more important are the objects included in this prayer ; *And with thy spirit*. The people do not reply ; *and with thee*, but, *with thy spirit* ; because, according to the observation of an author of the ninth age, every thing is mysterious and spiritual in the function which he exercises ; his heart can be penetrated with the awful responsibility of his only sacred office, in proportion to the ardour with which he applies his mind to the meditation of the



sublime truths that these prayers inculcate. Let us be candid, and acknowledge that till the present moment we never imagined this prayer of half the importance which it really is ; be assured that it is of the utmost consequence, both to yourselves and to us, to be well acquainted with its sense and spirit.

I say of the utmost consequence to yourselves : for when you hear us address you from the altar in these words, I am willing to believe that you do us the justice to suppose, that we are entirely engaged about the necessities of your souls, and that our prayers are immediately directed to draw down upon you the sanctifying Spirit, the spirit of consolation ; that in these few words we comprise all your necessities, include all the lawful wishes of your hearts, and unite every thing that the experience of our ministry suggests, as conducive both to your temporal and spiritual welfare.

I say also of the utmost consequence to us, provided you enter into the full spirit of this prayer, and do not reply to our salutation out of mere habit, without ever reflecting on the import of the words that are uttered. Pray that we may be animated with that lively faith, which steadily believes all that it teaches ; with that ardent zeal which is devoted to the salvation of our flock ; with that invincible patience which no trials nor contradictions can exhaust ; with that unalterable gentleness of disposition which is proof against contempt and insult ; with that sympathetic charity, which never

beholds the miseries of others, without wishing to ease them of a part. Ah, my brethren, may the Almighty manifest himself visibly both with your and with our spirit ! With your spirit, by the purity of your morals, by the wisdom that directs your steps, and the peace that reigns in your minds. May he unequivocally demonstrate that he is with our spirit, by the success of our ministry, by the unction of our words, by the fruit of our exhortations, by the sweetness of the consolations which you derive from the exercise of our paternal duties; in a word, may God be with us in time, in order to render us worthy of enjoying his presence in a blissful eternity. Amen.

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#### ON THE PRAYER CALLED THE COLLECT.

Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. St Matth. cap. 18. v. 20.

**J**ESUS Christ is in the midst of us, as often as charity unites, and piety assembles us together : he is ever in the midst of us by the presence of his spirit, by the influence of his mercy, by the merits of his labours and his sufferings. He is in the midst of us, not only when his whole church is assembled to celebrate those awful mysteries which the same faith endears to all who participate in the same unity : he is equally present in each of those particular congregations, in the midst of those less

numerous flocks, as in the most august and the most crowded temples ; as well on days the least solemn, as on those of the greatest festivity : nay, the minister attended by a single assistant, is as certain of enjoying this actual presence of his God, as the pontiff attended by crowds of the faithful, and environed by all the pomp of sacrifice. The most insignificant number is sufficient to interest his mercy : ‘ Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.’

It strikes me, my brethren, that I have discovered in the words of my text an explanation of the term *Collect*, by which the church distinguishes the prayer that terminates the preparation to the Holy sacrifice. Many authors, it is true, derive it from a different etymology, but this, which is adopted by the greater number, appears most proper to express the object of this prayer. Before we enter upon a consideration of its spirit, it may be useful to examine its origin, and the purpose to which the church has, at different times, applied it.

This prayer is known in the most ancient liturgies, under the name of The Prayer, Benediction, Collect, or Summary. It was called *the prayer*, as being the first of those which the priest, in a loud voice, offered for the congregation, and in which he was joined by all present to implore such graces as were needful for their particular necessities. There was a time when the church left it to the discretion of her ministers, both to choose the subject and to dictate the expressions of this prayer ;

under those circumstances it was usual not to confine himself to any set form of prayer, but to petition for such things as he saw best suited to the necessities of his people. Hence, without doubt, arose the custom of making collects for particular occasions of spiritual necessity, and even of those calamities which are only of a temporal nature.

This prayer was called a *benediction*, as being composed with a view to solicit such graces for the people as might shed a blessing upon all their designs and undertakings, upon all that regarded both their temporal and eternal interests. Hence, without doubt, is derived the custom of reciting it with hands raised towards Heaven, to signify that it is from Heaven alone that every benediction descends. Some ancient churches retained the practice of extending their arms in the form of a cross, to remind the faithful that he, who has nailed to the accursed tree the malediction that was registered against us, has merited for us, in exchange, the most abundant benedictions. It is called the *collect*—a word implying an assemblage—because it is a prayer common both to the priest and the congregation, common to all the churches throughout the known world; so that whatever the priest offers to the Almighty in one part of the globe, is ratified by the universal church. Hence the express prohibition issued by several general councils against the use of any of these prayers, without their being first approved by the bishop, with a view to prevent indiscreet zeal, or unenlightened

piety, from introducing any prayers that might be unworthy of the dignity of the church, and the solemnity of her liturgy.

In fine, it went under the name of *summary*, or abridgement, because, in a few emphatic words, it comprises all the graces most necessary for mankind. According to the remark of many enlightened men, this prayer is calculated to convey a comprehensive idea of the sentiments which should animate the bosoms of the whole body of the faithful: indeed, we cannot too earnestly invite those persons, to whom the Lord has imparted the gift of mental prayer, to make these collects the subject of their pious contemplation. The church has here comprised, in a few words, the great truths that should form the subject of the Christian's meditation, together with the most useful and important objects of his demand.

Before the commencement of these various prayers, the priest is always careful to give notice to the people in these words; *Let us pray*: To admonish them that this prayer is not confined to himself, in exclusion to the rest of the congregation; that in vain he spreads his hands to Heaven, if the faithful are not solicitous to raise their hearts thither; that, placed like Moses on the holy mountain, to protect the people that combat on the plain, the success of the combat depends not less on the zeal and ardour of the faithful to sustain his fainting arm, by the union of their prayers, than on the courage with which they resist the prince

of the Amalekites—the relentless enemy of their salvation.

These collects are varied and multiplied according to the circumstances and the solemnities of the occasion. Their number is generally augmented on the days of penitence, and among such as are employed on these occasions, not a few are of very high antiquity, and may be traced back to the earliest ages of the church: Of this number are those, in particular, which she employs on Holy-Saturday, with a view to draw down upon the catechumens, upon heretics, schismatics, and even on the Jews and the Gentiles, such graces as may operate in them a change of heart. According to the testimony of Origen, and the ecclesiastical writers of the first ages, these prayers are derived from apostolical tradition, and are, on this account, entitled to our most profound veneration, and calculated to excite in our hearts the tenderest and most solid devotion.

They were formerly addressed exclusively to the person of the Father, in consideration that it is the sacrifice of the Son that is about to be offered; that it is in him, and through him, that every prayer is addressed, and more especially such as compose the liturgy; so that the same divine goodness which condescended to charge himself with our debts, has also charged himself to present our vows and supplications before the throne of mercy. On this point of discipline, the church has since

varied; and it is her present practice to address her prayers to that particular person of the adorable Trinity, to whose honour the solemnity of the day is more especially directed.

But the terms in which they all conclude, at once show the entire confidence which the church places in the merits of Jesus Christ, and evince her faith in the mystery of the Godhead in the Trinity of persons—since it is *through Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit*, that the collect is always terminated. The equality of persons is also clearly implied, since it is sometimes the Father who is invoked through the Son; sometimes the Son, who is supplicated in conjunction with the Father, and in the unity of the Holy Spirit; while the same homage, adoration, and confidence, are manifested towards the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and the same graces solicited from them conjunctly, as from the sole and indivisible source of every perfect gift.

If the church multiplies these prayers on days of penitence, she confines herself to a single collect on occasions of great solemnity, with a view to keep the minds of the faithful steadily fixed on the main object that should engage their attention on these important festivals: and as all our mysteries, however they may seem to differ as to their object, tend to one and the same point—the glory of God and our own sanctification; hence the church would give us to understand, that in soliciting the

application of any particular mystery which she celebrates, we virtually demand the saving efficacy of the whole.

The church has also appropriated collects to the festivals of the saints: They contain a petition, grounded upon the principal virtues that have distinguished these friends of God, and serve us as so many engagements to the imitation of their principal virtues. But she has, at the same time, been particularly solicitous to point out the essential difference that faith makes between the saint that she honours, and the God whom she invokes. The saint is here distinguished by the appellation of servant; while God is supplicated under the name of our Lord and Master: *We beseech thee, O Lord.*

To render our homage more humble and striking, the church admonishes us, on certain days, to assume a more suppliant posture. *Let us kneel*; exclaims the priest, and, after an interval of silence, to allow the assistants time for recollection and a renewal of fervour, either himself or his deacon bids them—*arise*. This practice, which is reserved for days of penitence, recalls the Christian to those sentiments of grief and compunction which should accompany his prayers; to that interior attention which should convey them from the lips to the heart, and which alone can render our devotions agreeable to him who will be adored in spirit and in truth. To this account of the collect, let us add such reflections as may tend to give us a just idea



respecting it, as well as the dispositions in which we should recite it, in order to reap any real advantage; we need not be apprehensive, my brethren, of insisting too much upon an object that holds so distinguished a rank among the holy exercises which the church enjoins.

Prayer has been often described as a kind of holy violence offered to Heaven; it is represented in scripture by the importunity which Jacob used to the angel who had wrestled with him during his sleep. ‘I will not let you depart, said he, till I have received your blessing.’ The true Jacob is with us in the sacrifice of the Mass. Really present under the eucharistic species, visibly present, in some degree, in his officiating minister, Jesus Christ is about to enter the lists for us, and wrestle with the infernal powers, and the angel of darkness. This is the important moment to solicit the Almighty, through his beloved Son, not to depart till he has shed on his people the choicest of his benedictions: and how favourable the moment for importuning him with the liveliest ardour—the moment when we are about to offer him the object of his divine complacency, and his eternal benedictions! This is not the prayer of a single just man, or of a few just men united; it is the prayer of all the just of every age, and of every nation, and presented by him who is the inexhaustible source of all justice.

Nothing can give us a stronger idea of the charity that unites the faithful, than this prayer. The objects for which it petitions are common to the

whole body of the faithful; and, if the church is sometimes so condescending as to permit her ministers to offer the holy sacrifice for the particular necessities and the special intention of him who makes the oblation, yet, in the collect, she renders the object of the sacrifice general. Therefore, all who assist at these sacred rites, equally bear a part in this particular oblation, as if it were exclusively offered for their personal necessities: and here let me remind you, that the same reflection may be justly extended to those Masses that are celebrated for such of our brethren as are departed in the grace of Christ. My friends, let us therefore banish from our minds, and still more from our hearts, that culpable and selfish spirit which sometimes leads the faithful to oppose the established practices of the church: some would have no distinction or reserve in such prayers as are offered for the dead, so that the minister should make no exclusive mention of such as are, in a special manner, recommended to his notice: others, again, whose minds are exclusively engaged by the particular objects of their regret, persuade themselves that these prayers are unavailing to the repose of their departed relatives, unless every thing, both in the order of the sacrifice, and in the colour of the ornaments, be expressive of their immediate intentions. Both these parties deceive themselves by hurrying into extremes: The former, because they lose sight of that compassionate charity which engages the church to sympathize in the sorrows of all, even the lowliest of

her children : the latter, because they overlook that universal charity which regards the goods and evils of life as common to each of the members that compose the mystical body of Christ. Those may be considered as the truly wise, who, regardless of the manner in which the Mass is celebrated, and of the particular order or formulary that the priest follows, are only solicitous to unite themselves to the intentions of the church, in offering the victim of salvation—that saving victim, which was as truly immolated for each individual, as for the whole Christian world.

These reflections naturally lead us to consider the dispositions which ought to accompany the recitation of the collect. I shall not dwell long upon this subject ; in many instances, it would but be a repetition of what I have already said respecting the dispositions that ought to accompany our prayers, and especially those which the church has consecrated in her liturgy. A profound awe, a religious attention to the words of these prayers, a perfect conformity to the sentiments that these words express, a firm confidence in him to whom these vows are addressed, a lively faith in Jesus Christ by whom our prayers are offered, an unaffected sorrow for the sins of which we entreat for pardon in these prayers, a fixed resolution to practise the virtues whose observance is enforced in these prayers : such are the dispositions that alone can stamp a value on our devotions. Added to these, we must, by no means, forget that tender

charity towards our brethren, which should engage us to pray mutually for each other, and with which our hearts must be animated, if we desire to correspond with the intentions of the church, so well marked out in the term by which she distinguishes this prayer. May it be effectually a *collect* in our regard, by uniting us in the bonds of a charity which nothing can sever: hence we may conclude of what infinite importance it is to a Christian, to bring to this prayer a due preparation of heart, for though in substance it be one of the shortest parts of the Mass, it is, in effect, one of the most interesting in the eye of faith.

If the apostles, jealous in some measure that the precursor of their Lord had taught his disciples to pray, besought the same favour from their Divine Master, ought not we, who experience so much languor in the prayers we address to the Saviour; ought not we to entreat him with the like fervency: ‘Lord teach us to pray?’ Not, most gracious Saviour, not that we stand in need of any forms of prayer to express the objects of our necessities; thy church, anticipating all our wants, has amply provided us with all that are requisite; and thou hast thyself given us one that includes every other: no, what we demand is, that thou wouldst graciously teach us to pray in the manner thou prayest,—thou that art the *perpetual intercessor*. Grant that we may pray with thee—with that plenitude of merit which God will not reject in time, and which he will assuredly crown in eternity. Amen.

## ON THE AMEN.

And the four living creatures said : Amen.—APOC. c. v. 14.

**T**HIS Amen, my brethren, is the conclusion of that new canticle which was heard by the well-beloved disciple, as it was chaunted by the heavenly choirs around the throne of the Eternal, and the altar of the Lamb. It is thus that all those benedictions, all those prayers, all those homages, terminate, that are rendered to him who was, who is, and who is to come, by the four and twenty elders that encompass the throne, by the four living creatures that fall prostrate in presence of the Lamb, by the myriads of angels that adore him, and by the innumerable multitude of men of all nations, tribes, and tongues, that compose the court of the King of Glory. Can it, then, be a matter of surprise that the church, who always interests herself about the happiness that awaits her children, should accustom them to repeat this amen, this consoling amen, which, in heaven, is expressive, both of the plenitude of glory that is rendered to the Almighty, the plenitude of joy that shall environ his elect, and the plenitude of grateful love with which our hearts should be penetrated? I have deemed it but just, my brethren, to devote an entire instruction to this important and comprehensive word. The amen of this place of exile, is but a shadow of that which shall resound through eternity; yet, were it sung on our part with

a faith truly active, a zeal truly fervent, and a will truly upright and sincere, it could not fail to produce the first fruits of that peace, of whose everlasting enjoyment it affords us a happy presage. Open, therefore, your hearts, for it is to the heart that I wish to speak in my explanation of this mysterious word.

*Amen* is a Hebrew word, that, according to the various circumstances in which it is applied, may signify either an acquiescence to a known truth, an acknowledgement of some precept that has been delivered, or a desire to behold the accomplishment of some promise that has been previously made. There are some circumstances in the scriptures which may bear either of these different significations; there are others which comprehend the whole conjointly: When Moses announces to the children of Israel the blessings or the maledictions which God, at various times, had pronounced upon his people, according to the different dispositions that they manifested, either of fidelity or rebellion, of thankfulness or ingratitude, the *amen*, with which the people replied to each of these maledictions of the law, was an avowal of all the truths contained in this volume, an assent to all the anathemas it denounced, and a submission to all the precepts it enjoined. When employed at the end of the prayers of the church, this word may bear the same signification; indeed, its sense must be determined by the prayer that precedes it. Should the church, for example, enforce the practice of some virtue, the *amen* is, in

that case, a promise to render our conduct conformable to its injunction. Again, should the church demand the pardon of our faults, deliverance from the slavery of sin, or the sanctification of our souls, the *amen* may then be considered as expressive of a wish to obtain the accomplishment of this happiness. It is oftentimes an act of faith; and therefore the recital of the various formularies of faith, is always terminated by the *amen*. How much then, is it to be apprehended, lest this word, which is so often in our mouths, should make no impression on our hearts! And above all, how much reason have we to fear lest it should one day rise up in judgment to condemn the tepidity of our faith, the languor of our devotion, and the injustice of our deeds!—lest we should hear these alarming words pronounced by our Judge: ‘Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee, thou wicked servant!’ This misery can only be prevented by a daily attention to the import of this mysterious word, and an habitual fidelity to the duties that it prescribes.

Let us bestow a due attention, my brethren, on the three different acceptations of which this little word is capable. It is sometimes regarded as an acquiescence to a known truth; and, in this sense, the *amen* implies: I believe, or I profess it to be true: it is a duty that I ought to perform in a faith that is simple, and presumes not on its own reasonings; that is firm, and proof against the delusions of error; that is humble, and seeks not to

fathom the depths of the divine mind ; in a faith that is enlightened, and neglects not to ground itself firmly on the truths it professes ; in a faith that is active, and does not belie the sanctity of its professions, by any unworthiness of conduct. I answer *amen* to all that the church believes and teaches, whether they be truths of a speculative or of a practical nature ; whether they be above my reason, or such as my reason can adopt ; whether they be truths of an alarming or of a consoling description ; whether they be obscure, or such as God has permitted me to comprehend ; whether they regard the present time, or wait to be developed only in eternity. I answer *amen* to the word of God, which is neither capable, nor was ever intended, to lead me into error ; to the testimony of his church, which he always assists by the guidance of his Holy Spirit ; to the instructions of its pastors, who are united under one supreme pastor, the visible representative of the invisible Head, which is Jesus Christ, who alone is the way, the truth and the life. I repeat this *amen* in token of the sincerity of my belief, in opposition to the voice of my corrupt nature, in opposition to the clamours of heresy and schism, and the outrageous declamations of incredulity and licentiousness ; I reject, in all the sincerity of my heart, the specious sophisms of an antichristian philosophy, whose dogmas and specious morality can never accord with the doctrines of revelation ; I believe, not only with that faith of the mind, which is satisfied with a



bare assent to established truths, but with that faith of the heart, which renders these truths effectual, with that active and substantial faith, which reduces them to practice. And let it also be remembered, that this *amen*, which I repeat in testimony of my belief, involves, at the same time, a sincere assent to all the precepts which God has established through the medium of his church.

In this spirit, I solemnly promise to submit to the will of God, in whatever manner he shall be pleased to reveal it; to the designs of his wisdom, in conforming with punctuality to all the rules which it prescribes, to all the duties which it imposes, to all the events that enter into the economy of the Divine Wisdom; to the views of his Providence, by submitting with humble resignation to all the privations to which he shall deem it expedient to subject me; to the decrees of his justice, by accepting, without a murmur, all the pains he shall inflict, all the chastisements he shall deem it needful for me to undergo. To the sinner, therefore, this *amen* is the testimony of a voluntary submission to the penance which his sins have merited, and of which it presupposes a heartfelt detestation. To the just man it implies a ready acceptance of those spiritual privations, those painful perplexities, the offspring of a tender conscience; those moments, in which the Almighty appears to abandon the disconsolate soul, in order to bring her fidelity to the test.

Nothing should damp the ardour of a Christian

who offers this prayer in all the sincerity of his heart, since the Almighty can do nothing but what he has already solicited in that daily prayer, ‘thy will be done;’ can impose no law which he is not prepared to meet with submission; can inflict no tribulation which he has not already anticipated in a spirit of humble conformity; can propose no virtue which he has not already formed the resolution to practise. Yes, every act of Christian virtue is comprised in this short but expressive word: it is an act of faith—as being expressive of an unqualified submission to the truths of revelation: it is an act of hope—since it at once solicits and awaits the accomplishment of all the good things that faith has promised: it is an act of charity—inasmuch as it contains an express wish to please the Almighty: it is an act of humility—for it immediately supposes a renunciation of one’s own will, which is one of the most meritorious acts of this virtue: it is also an act of brotherly love—inasmuch as this exclamation, which is repeated by all the faithful, breathes a natural sentiment of union and peace. The Christian, therefore, who repeats this *amen* in a spirit of sincerity, has no longer any attachment to his private interests, and consequently no farther cause for animosity and contention.

Ah! my brethren, how strongly would the church on earth resemble that in heaven, if, singing the same canticles, we sung them in the same spirit! The angels, the saints, and the elect, each in the order prescribed by the Divine Wisdom, are inces-

santly chaunting this *amen* of praise : no dispute arises among them respecting rank or pre-eminence : their heart is never ulcerated by envy, the peace of their bosoms is never discomposed by the right which their co-heirs possess to the same happiness. The fervour of this *amen* is never allayed by any cold indifference towards God, by any feelings of hatred towards their equals, by any indulgence of self-love or self-complacency. How opposite this to our conduct ! our lips are perpetually dwelling on the glory of God, and yet, by a strange contradiction, our hearts are seeking their own glory ; we continually solicit his indulgence, and yet refuse to grant the same to our brother : we answer *amen* to all that the Church demands and promises in our name, and yet pursue with unabated ardour the gratification of our own perverse wills !

What is the *amen* of the hypocrite ? what, but an act of pretended homage, of base dissimulation, by which he professes every thing that his heart denies, adopts every thing that his heart disapproves, and promises every thing that his actions contradict.

What is the *amen* of the avaricious man, but an affected demand of the good things of eternity, which his heart is too hardened to purchase by the sacrifice of the unsubstantial enjoyments of this world ? —an act of counterfeit self-denial, from which his cupidity appeals to the tribunal of his heart.

What is the *amen* of the votary of ambition, but a mockery of homage rendered to the humility of Jesus Christ ? the opprobrium of the man-God

is revolting to his pride, and the maxims of the gospel contradictory to his practice ; he, therefore, sacrifices them to the idol of false greatness !

What is the *amen* of the vindictive man ? what, but the most outrageous irony against the God of mercy ; as if he should say : “ May the Almighty grant me his pardon, but let it be accompanied by a dispensation, on my part, from the duty of forgiveness ; may he forget my offences, but leave me at liberty to resent those I receive from others.” This detail is more than sufficient to demonstrate, my brethren, that if this word is pregnant with instruction to the Christian who meditates thereon, it also stands as a continual condemnation against him who dares to belie it in his practice.

In fine, I consider the *amen* as a desire, a demand of the fulfilment of all those promises that have been made to man. The royal prophet, in one of those psalms that descant upon the future greatness of Jesus Christ, the establishment of his church, and the duration of his empire, finishes the magnificent detail with these words : *Fiat ! Fiat !* an expression that exactly corresponds with the object of our present discourse. In the *amen* which we repeat to all the church has promised, we reply in the very spirit that animates this psalm, and express the most ardent desire that our prayers may be heard. If this *amen* were always pronounced, on our part, with becoming earnestness, we should merit the eulogium which the Holy Spirit bestowed on the prophet Daniel when he termed him ‘ a man

of desire:’ but in order that such sentiments may accompany this prayer; that the Christian may say with truth, *So be it*, he should have a heart purified from every earthly affection, and warmed with the love of the good things of eternity; in order to pronounce these words with effect, his conversation should be truly in heaven; his heart inseparably attached to the treasure prepared for it, should cautiously avoid every thing that tends to attach it to the earth, and fix its affections on the things of this world. In addition to this, prayer should be its continual exercise—prayer, that has been termed the wings of the soul, on which she is enabled to soar even to the throne of the Eternal; spiritual reading, also, and meditation on the truths of eternity, should be her daily nourishment—indeed, what but contemplation shall be her employment in the abodes of bliss? This *amen*, this word, so pregnant with instruction, should be ever on the Christian’s lips, ever present to his mind, and engraven in indelible characters upon his heart. But, how rarely do we meet with those whose faith is of a nature so fervid and sublime as to render them, by anticipation, the inhabitants of heaven; who, according to the expression of one of the fathers, touch the earth only with their feet, while their aspiring heads already reach the abodes of eternity!

Yes, my brethren, I regard the *amen*, which the church so often repeats in her canticles, as the shout of victory, as the distinguishing watch-word of the soldiers of Christ. May not the *amen*, which is

engraven upon our hearts, be, in some measure, regarded as the mysterious mark by which God shall recognize his adopted children?

But what, O Lord, is the *amen* of this valley of tears, in comparison with that which shall resound through eternity? Can we properly term it a canticle of gladness? Alas! wanderers on the banks of the rivers of Babylon, and exiles from our native land, how can we sing the songs of the Lord? No, my God; like thy people of old, we will hang up our instruments of music, till we are permitted joyfully to resume them in thy kingdom; meanwhile, the *amen* that we repeat here below, must be confined to the expression of our desires and our longing expectations. But how different this from the canticle we hope to chaunt in the abodes of thy glory! Nothing to bound our desires, nothing to limit our hopes; to enjoy without fear, to possess without end, to repeat without ceasing; 'Benediction, and honour, and glory, and power, be to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb that was slain, for ever and ever.' Such is the object of every *amen* that is repeated here below, and the subject of all those that shall resound throughout eternity: Amen, amen, amen.

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#### ON THE EPISTLE.

Give attention to reading; meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may be manifest to all. 1 Epist. to Timothy, c. iv. 13, 15.

**S**UCH is the excellent advice that the apostle St Paul gives to his disciple Timothy; and the duty

he inculcates equally concerns all the ministers whom God has appointed for the instruction of his people. But it is not merely confined to the priestly character; the whole body of the faithful ought to apply it to themselves, and conform thereto in practice, since the perusal of the sacred Scriptures, and other spiritual writings, is the most common way by which God conducts us to the knowledge of truth. The word of God is equally worthy of respect, whether it be conveyed to the mind by the eye or the ear. Less useful, without doubt, than that which is found in the ministry of the word, yet this kind of instruction possesses its particular advantages. These advantages are implied in the words of my text. Dwell upon the truths that the Scriptures contain, and apply them to your advancement in holiness; 'Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them.' The manner in which the truths of Christianity are delivered from the pulpit, is often so rapid and concise, as to fail of making a due impression on the memory; whereas, through the medium of attentive reading, they are conveyed to the mind in a more solid and durable manner. What the apostle says of reading in general, I shall apply to that particular part which the church employs in the Mass.

We now pass on to the second part of the liturgy, which I shall distinguish by the name of the Instruction, because, in the different objects that compose it, the church appears to have particularly directed her intention to the strengthening and enlightening our faith. The epistle is what

this day demands your attention ; a subject that may furnish matter for reflections, that have hitherto, perhaps, escaped your observation.

The custom of reading aloud to the congregation such instructions as are suited to the various objects of religion, appears so intimately connected with religion itself, that there is not a sect but what adheres to this practice with scrupulous attention. Indeed, it is one of the most effectual means in the power of man to perpetuate received doctrines, whether these doctrines be founded upon truth, or have only error for their support. And melancholy is the reflection, that the enemies of our faith are, perhaps, in many respects more zealous than ourselves in the employment of these means. The deluded followers of Mahomet, read, study, and meditate on the Koran, and perform the ridiculous ceremonies it enjoins, with more attention, fidelity, and respect, than we testify towards the sacred writings of the apostles and evangelists.

Assembled in their synagogues, on the day of the Sabbath, the Jews always commence the customary exercises of these meetings, by reading a portion of the law or the prophets ; and to the confusion of the majority of Christians be it said, that the most simple and illiterate among them are better instructed in the doctrines, ceremonies and precepts of the law of Moses, than we are generally found to be in the sublime doctrines of Jesus Christ. This practice, far from being abolished after the subversion of the Jewish religion was, in some



measure, the only custom which the church retained out of a system of worship that was entirely carnal and exterior.—Tertullian speaks of it, as one of the most ancient and most salutary of observances. The lesson was appointed to be read, in his time, as at present, about the beginning of the service; and it was equally esteemed then, as it is now, the best preparation to the awful mysteries.

It still retains its ancient name of *Epistle*, or letter, because it was generally extracted from those epistles which the apostles addressed to such of the faithful as were the special objects of their ministry. In this view, we ought to regard them as letters addressed immediately to us, as the pastoral instructions of our first bishops, as the paternal advice of those whom the Almighty has established to be the columns of truth, and the light of ages.

This lesson often went under no other name than that of *the Apostle*; which title was applied to St Paul as a mark of distinction, because his epistles are more numerous, more learned, and contain a greater variety of matter than those of the other apostles, while, at the same time, by far the greater number of the lessons are taken from them. Not that the church neglected to read to the first faithful the books of the Old Testament; on the contrary, as the truths they contain are introductory to those of the New, the first pastors were careful, frequently to call the attention of Christians

to the figure, in order the more effectually to teach them to prize the substance. The church took advantage then, as she does at present, of such solemnities as have the great mysteries of religion for their object, in order to call the attention of her children to the types and prophecies that announced these wonders : and do but reflect what a subject of consolation it must have afforded the first Christians, who bordered so nearly upon the days that witnessed the accomplishment of these mysteries, see that every thing which was fulfilling under their very eyes, had been predicted in a manner the most distinct and luminous ! On this account the apostle admonishes them, that whatever had been written, was intended for their instruction.

Sometimes the church varied the matter of the lesson, in order to suit the exigencies of particular times and circumstances. During the first ages, she often substituted, in place of the Holy Scripture, a relation of the actions, the combats and the death of her martyrs ; she carefully collected their last expressions, as so many eloquent lessons to enliven the faith, and animate the courage of her children. Not unfrequently the letters of these martyrs, addressed to the beloved flock which they had governed, supplied the place of the apostolic epistles. Equally intelligent in all that she does, and all that she prescribes, the church discovered the marvellous secret of superadding to the force of truth, the powerful motives of example.

As, in these early days, the objects of faith need-

ed light and explanation, the church permitted the simple faithful to propose their doubts and difficulties on such particular points as she had offered to their notice; when, in answers full of wisdom and instruction, the pastors explained to the people the most important truths they had heard in the course of the lesson. I have dwelt thus long upon these different usages, which are rendered so venerable by the spirit in which they were instituted, in order to place them in the same point of view with those which the church observes at present, and which are not less worthy of our veneration, because, in compliance with the dictates of wisdom, they have undergone some variation. Now, that is established, that truths are cleared up, and that persecutions have ceased, she allows no other subjects for the epistles read during the celebration of her august mysteries, than such as are taken from the canonical books, that is, from those that she recognizes as divinely inspired. It is but just, that at the awful moment, when a God is about to offer himself in sacrifice, man should be silent, and listen only to the dictates of the spirit of God.

We shall not fail to remark the attention bestowed in the selection of the different lessons which the church has appointed, and how admirably they are adapted to particular times, to different mysteries, and to the multiplied necessities of her children. How enlightened would that Christian become, who should consider it a duty to follow the spirit of this tender mother through all the instruc-

tions she proposes ! As often as the people assemble to celebrate the day of the Lord, they here find the most solid principles of Christian morality, the most severe, yet just, reproaches directed against the most common disorders, the most tender and pathetic exhortations to the practice of every Christian virtue. Each mystery will be found to present its particular instruction : on those days that are consecrated to the memory of the saints, the epistle presents such exhortations as are calculated to recal the example of their virtues, to animate us to sustain the same combats, to incite us to share the same triumphs. For many ages the church decreed that this lesson should be read by one of her ministers, who was especially appointed to this function, and who on this account bore the name of Reader. This order still subsists in the hierarchy, and forms one of the four lesser orders. But to render the reading of the holy Scriptures more venerable and impressive in the eyes of the faithful, and, above all, to convince them that the lesson which is read during the celebration of the sacred mysteries, demands a more profound veneration, a more serious attention, a more perfect docility of mind, than any other part of her verbal instructions, she has ordained that the volume which contains these truths should be placed on the altar itself ; that one of her ministers should be charged with the duty of resuming it, if I may be allowed the expression, from this sacred repository, in order to read it to the people ; in fine, that

the dignity of this minister might correspond to the importance of his function, she has raised him to a superior rank in the church, hallowed his order by the title of sacred, attached him to his functions by indissoluble bonds, and laid him under an obligation of entering into no farther engagements with the world.

These different observances naturally lead us to examine the dispositions that should accompany this lesson. As to the exterior dispositions—the minister recites it standing, with head uncovered, with hands joined before his breast, and from some conspicuous situation in the church, in order, as far as possible, to be heard by the whole congregation. Many general, as well as particular Councils have expressly forbidden any other reading during the lesson; together with all such prayers as have no reference to it, but distract the mind from the undivided attention which it requires. It is, therefore, the intention of the church that the faithful should, as far as possible, follow the officiating minister. Persons of the other sex, as well as those who are unacquainted with the language in which the Epistle is read, are allowed to make use of a translation authorized by the church; but all such reading, as is irrelative to the subject of the day, should be avoided. The attitude we are directed to assume, during this part of the service, may serve to give us an idea of the manner in which it should be heard; it is usual to sit during the Epistle, and this position, at once the most tran-

quill and the most commodious of those that are permitted in the temple, is most proper to represent that attention of the mind, and that meditation of the heart, which are inculcated in this expression of the wise man ; ‘ He shall sit solitary, and keep silence.’

We cannot too earnestly exhort the faithful, not merely to content themselves with the simple reading of that portion of the sacred volume which is delivered in the temple on days of particular solemnity, but to peruse it on their return to their respective homes, that, impressed with the truths it contains, they may penetrate more feelingly into its spirit, and derive more abundant advantages from its application. I cannot too much applaud the zeal and piety of those parents, who, on every holiday, make a practice of repeating, in the midst of their families, the lessons which the church has appointed for the particular day ; and, above all, I would exhort them to take advantage of the docility of their little ones, to instil into their tender minds these important points of instruction. We observe, from every day’s experience, how many good effects result from a practice so very easy in itself : an annual repetition of the same truths must have a wonderful tendency to engrave them indelibly on the memory. If the first rudiments of instruction have been properly laid, the truths that we pronounce from the pulpit will be more clearly received, and more feelingly retained ; the object of other spiritual reading will be better under

stood; a taste for piety will be developed, in proportion to the growth of reason, for that which is performed with the greatest facility, is generally accompanied with the greatest relish and satisfaction. Thus we generally find that an infancy thus happily tutored to piety, will produce a manhood of virtue: and should a Christian of this description renounce the practices of his youth, and meet with a fall, he will find within himself a powerful resource, an in-born propensity to good, which, sooner or later, will bring him back to the paths of justice and truth.

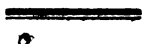
I can scarcely deem it necessary to dwell upon the attention and respect with which we ought to listen to the instructions conveyed in the Epistle. The time, the place, the subject—every thing must impress the Christian with a salutary dread, a profound veneration. It is placed immediately after the prayer called the Collect, a circumstance that reminds me of an observation of St Ambrose, which every Christian should bear in mind, when he follows the minister who recites the Epistle. “We speak to our God,” says this father, “every time we pray: he speaks in his turn to us, every time we read his holy word.” Yes, my brethren, after having spoken to God by the different prayers which the church proposes, and above all by that which the priest offers in the name of the whole assembled faithful, with his hands extended towards Heaven—then it is that the Supreme Majesty of Heaven condescends to bend from the skies,

in order to speak to us, and offer such heavenly instructions as are suitable to our particular necessities, and relative to the solemnities of the occasion. Let us, therefore, listen to him with that feeling interest which should spring from the consciousness of our necessities; with that holy avidity with which a spiritual hunger should inspire us; with that lively grief which should penetrate the heart of the Christian, when, in the striking picture of vice and sin presented to his view, he beholds the wounds of his own soul; with that humble distrust in ourselves which bids us hope no change of life, no reformation of manners, from the light of our own wisdom, or the strength of our own resolutions; with that spirit of prayer which solicits the ability to comprehend his precepts, and the fidelity to practise them; with that character of docility which bends, with humble resignation, to every thing that God ordains: Oh, let us be solicitous to escape that rigorous sentence of Jesus Christ, which announces that by his word we shall be judged! If it does not prove the means of our correction in time, it will certainly rise to our condemnation in eternity—‘For it shall not return to him without effect.’—When, therefore, we behold the minister return to the altar, in order to replace the volume from which he has delivered the truths of salvation, let us not fail to ask ourselves these important questions:—What change, what salutary effects has, it produced in my heart? What good resolutions has it induced me to form, what malady



of my soul has it exposed to my view, and what remedy has it pointed out? Is it not ready, at this moment, to rise up in judgment against the hardness, the insensibility of my heart? Will not this terrible volume be opened to my view, on the day of general retribution, to reproach me with the truths that I knew in theory, but denied in practice?

Preserve us, O God, from this awful visitation of thine anger! Speak thou to our hearts, while the voice of thy minister resounds in our ears. Grant us understanding, accompanied by the love and practice of those truths which thou thyself hast revealed, in order that thy word may be truly to us a word of instruction in time, and a testimony of our justification in the day of thy wrath! Amen.



#### ON THE GRADUAL, THE PROSE, AND THE TRACT.

God is King of all the earth; sing ye wisely.—Ps. xlii. v. 8.

**A** spirit of wisdom and of holy recollection should accompany all those actions of a Christian which have religion for their object. Without this disposition every thing must become cold and insipid, every thing must be rendered useless and unavailing towards his salvation. God is not honoured by those prayers and canticles in which the heart has no share;—the beauties of language,—the solemn and measured cadence of the psalmody,

without this attention of the mind and the heart, are, according to the expression of one of the fathers, only a species of derision and irony. Let us, therefore, carry with us this spirit of recollection into all the exercises to which the church invites us; and above all, my brethren, when to excite our faith she selects the expressions of a prophet whose canticles breathe the very flames of charity. She does this in the prayer called the *Gradual*, which forms a part of this day's instruction. We shall consider what object the church proposes in this prayer, why she has placed it at the close of the epistle, and before the commencement of the gospel; and, at the same time, what use is to be made of the psalms of the royal prophet. This part of the Mass may, perhaps, have appeared to you the most barren in reflections; indeed, the greater part of Christians pay less attention to this than any other part of the Mass: yet it possesses a particular utility, and requires dispositions peculiar to itself. We will consider them more at large.

The *gradual* is so denominated, because it is sung upon the steps ascending to the desk. It consists of a few verses selected from some psalm. It was formerly the custom to chaunt the entire psalm by the two divisions of the choir, as in the other divine offices. On days of penitence, both the clergy and people preserved a profound silence, whilst a single chaunter intoned the psalm, and continued it unaccompanied to the end: from this circumstance

it has gained the name of *Tract*. The psalm always bears a reference to the festival of the day, and the church generally introduces such expressions of the prophet, as convey the most exalted idea of the great mysteries that compose our religion. The gradual, therefore, will be found to offer the most important instructions to the Christian who is desirous of meditating thereon, and of observing the relation it bears to the particular object of each solemnity he celebrates. This chaunt is terminated by a series of concluding tones, to which the name of *Neume*, or exclamation, has been given, because it is intended by the church to excite a holy joy in the hearts of the faithful; and nothing could effect this purpose better than these tones, which, as they swell in loud melody, seem, in the most striking manner, to mark the vivacity of her transports, which no language could express. To the last verse she adds the *alleluia*, which is redoubled in the pascal season, in order to express the liveliest emotions of her joy at that period. As this *alleluia* is frequently repeated in the offices of the church, and as it contains abundant motives to enliven your piety and animate your faith, I shall make it the subject of my next instruction.

On her principal festivals, the church substitutes, in place of this *Neume*, some hymn, in which are detailed either the principal truths contained in the mystery commemorated on the occasion, or the virtues for which the saint of the day is particularly

remarkable. Let us examine each of these practices, in order to enter into their spirit.

In the first place, the church had doubtless an eye upon our weakness, when she portioned out the time destined for the celebration of the holy mysteries, between prayer and reading. In those happy times of primitive fervour, when the faithful spent the whole day, and sometimes the entire night, in the sanctuary, this variety was found necessary to alleviate that intensity of application, which might, perhaps, have been wearied by too great a uniformity in these holy exercises. The fervour of Christians is so considerably abated since that period, my brethren, that this happy contrivance is become still more indispensable. Happy should we be if we knew how to profit by this consoling indulgence of the church, in order to renew our piety and redouble our attention ! But has not this admirable transition from prayer to reading, and from reading to the music of the psalmody, too often proved an occasion of irksomeness and dissipation ?

Secondly, the choice which the church has made of the book of Psalms, in exclusion to every other, ought to give us an exalted idea, to inspire us with a deep veneration, and to excite a decided partiality towards these divine canticles. Their essential relation to Jesus Christ and his Spouse, the image which the Royal Prophet traces out of the greatness, and the splendid view that he presents of the reign of the Messiah, the lessons of fidelity and virtue which he there offers,—every thing in

this volume of the sublimest poetry, should inflame our hearts, and furnish us, not only during the moment of the holy sacrifice, but through all the actions of our life, with continual motives for emulation and love. Happy the Christian who has habituated himself from his youth to draw from this sacred source, and to store his memory and his heart with those divine expressions ! We learn from experience, what habitual use may be made of the psalms. They are applicable to all the various points of our religion, as well as to all the different events of our lives ; they calm all the tumults of the soul, satisfy all the distracting uncertainties of the mind, dissipate all the sorrows, all the disquietudes of the soul. But it is in those long and painful infirmities, when the violence of a raging distemper, and the debility of the whole frame, preclude the possibility of any attention to the exercises of religion, that the Christian, whose memory and whose heart are filled with these consoling expressions, can, in recalling them to his recollection, find a powerful relief from his pains, an effectual motive for patience, and an habitual subject for confidence.

During the course of our ministry, we have frequent opportunities of ascertaining the truth of this observation. As it is the book of Psalms that most frequently furnishes matter for consolation in our addresses to the sick, we are soon enabled to discover, by the impression which our discourse makes upon them, what attention they have bestowed on

this part of the sacred writings : to those who are animated by a spirit of piety, we perceive that this language is become quite natural, while it scarcely makes any impression on those who have never in their lives attended to these sacred canticles.

Thirdly, it is the duty of every Christian, to peruse attentively the words that compose the *gradual*, in order that he may make a practical application of them to his own soul ; and, considering that this prayer is one of the shortest in the liturgy, would it not be advantageous to engrave it on the memory, in order that it may, in some measure, become the continual object of his meditation during the course of the solemnity ? For, granting that all the faithful do not possess sufficient abilities for meditation, yet, we must confess, that the greater part feel a repugnance and inaptitude towards this holy exercise, only because they read, chaunt, and pray, without attention. In general, nothing but plain good sense is requisite for the attainment of this important object, so conducive to our spiritual comfort and improvement. The various reflections which the Holy Spirit has dictated to the prophets, are too energetic, too clear, and too efficacious, not to strike the most simple, and afford abundant nourishment to their piety.

In the fourth place, let us not fail to enter into that spirit of consolation, joy, and holy confidence, which the church seeks, by means of the *Prose*, to inspire on great solemnities. The tone in which it is chaunted, is generally less grave than that of the

other hymns and canticles; and if an attention to the harmony and beauty of the music were sufficient to secure the fruits that might be derived therefrom, we should, on this point, have ample reason to congratulate the generality of Christians. But how many among them make it less an object of edification than of dissipation; how many esteem this part of the Mass, for no other reason, than for the beauty of the musical composition, without ever reflecting upon the sense of the divine expressions; who join in the harmony with that kind of joy which would be more suitable to a prophane song, than to those canticles that breathe nothing but the pure joys of eternity.

Fifthly, Let us listen in a spirit of penance to the mournful chaunt that the church has chosen for the *Tract*. In order perfectly to conform to the spirit of this prayer, we ought to peruse it attentively, and meditate on it interiorly, while it is chaunted by one or more of the choir. This would be complying with the ancient custom, for the tract was formerly chaunted by a single voice—a custom that was well calculated to recal the faithful to penitence and contrition of heart. This plaintive voice, which arose from the midst of the assembly, was expressive of the lively grief of the Christians that composed it; because silence, sighs, and tears, are the only expressions which a heart overwhelmed with bitterness is capable of uttering. May such be our feeling as often as we hear this prayer chaunted; and if, in certain circumstances,

the church grants us permission to unite our voice to that of her ministers, let it always be with that gravity and recollection which are suited to times of penitential grief.

On the greater festivals, these verses of the *gradual* or *tract* are chaunted with particular solemnity, by which the church seeks to admonish us, that although every day which is set apart as holy, demands an equal degree of devotion, yet that there are particular truths and mysteries in our religion, which claim a more marked attention, a more lively gratitude:—and let it be remembered, that we always tread on secure ground, when we follow the church with punctuality through all the varieties of her solemn worship.

In fine, the *neumes*, as I before observed, are intended as so many acclamations of joy, and represent, by the variety of their sounds, that canticle which St John heard in Heaven, when the mingled voices of myriads of the just, instead of articulate sounds, resembled rather the majestic and tumultuous dashing of the billows of the deep. This *neume* is chaunted by the whole assembled people, and is a kind of ratification of all that was expressed in the words preceding it. Let us, therefore, unite our voices, and, with one heart and one mind, sing the praises of our common Lord.

I shall not extend my reflections farther on this part of the Mass. Suffice it to observe, my brethren, that to reap the many advantages resulting from this practice, it will be useful to select out,



and dwell with particular attention on such prayers as the church has applied to her most important solemnities, and in which she gives us a view of our own weakness and misery, and of the happiness that awaits us in a future life. You will find her always attentive to trace out, in the pomp of her festivities, the splendour of her ceremonies, and the beauty of her psalmody, a lively picture of the delights of eternity; the Christian, therefore, who regards all her ceremonies with the eyes of faith, dwells on all her prayers with attention, and chaunts all her canticles in a spirit of devotion, will be filled with a pleasing confidence, and feel his heart overflow with holy joy, till unable to contain his transports, he is induced to exclaim with the prophet : The beauty of the daughter of Zion is from within, it is hidden from profane eyes, they are unable to discover her interior excellencies.

Yes, the carnal Christian beholds nothing but the exterior of these august ceremonies; nothing but the splendour of the ornaments, and the numerous train of priests and Levites that environ the altar; he hears nothing but that external harmony, which strikes only the ear of the body; and, in this view, we must allow that the festivities of the world possess something far more attractive. When, therefore, any of these men of pleasure condescend to visit our temples, they find our music and our solemnities cold and insipid, and solace themselves, by sacrilegious pleasantries, for the listlessness which they experience in the sanctuary.

On the contrary, to the Christian who lives in spirit, who attends with religious awe the temple of the Lord, the object of all these ceremonies is apparent. Not a word is uttered, not an action performed by the minister, of which he does not discover the motive, penetrate the meaning, and make a practical application to his own soul.

Grant, O Lord, that henceforth we may not hold to the dead letter, but become spiritualized Christians. Grant that we may enter into the spirit of all the practices, and all the ceremonies, which thy church observes. Never let an habitual attendance at these awful rites weaken their impression on our hearts ! Like thyself, O my God, thy faithful spouse does nothing but what is conducive to utility : emulous, in some degree, of thy wisdom, mercy and justice, she imitates them here below in her various functions, at once awful and consoling. In all her sacred offices she speaks of thy glory, thy goodness, and thy avenging justice : render us, therefore, most feelingly alive to every thing that interests the majesty of thy name, penetrate our hearts with thy holy fear, inflame our desires towards the good things of eternity ! Grant, that to these holy exercises we may bring corresponding dispositions ; and that the canticle we have commenced in time, may be prolonged throughout eternity. Amen.

## ON THE ALLELUIA.

Alleluia shall be sung through the streets. Tobias, c. xiii. v. 22.

**T**HIS thought afforded consolation to the most virtuous of the Israelites, amidst the sorrows of captivity. Tobias anticipated in idea those happy times, when the Lord should dry up the tears of his people, conduct them back to their country, and, as some compensation for the sorrows of exile, permit them once again to sing his divine canticles. This Israelite is an image of the Christian; this captivity is a figure of the oppression we endure here below; this Jerusalem, whose every street and highway was to resound with songs of praise, is a lively representation of Heaven, our celestial country. It is there, and only there, that enjoying the full liberty of the children of God, this *alleluia*, which is so often interrupted by our tears, and sometimes interdicted by the church on days of mourning and penitence, shall be resumed without any pause, or any fear of interruption. But when the church permits us to chaunt this hymn of exaltation, my brethren, let us be cautious not to yield to a dangerous security. Like the Israelites on the banks of the rivers of Babylon, let us keep our hearts within the bounds of discretion, let our joy be tempered by the salutary fear of the dangers that menace, and of the enemies that surround us; let this canticle, while it elevates the soul to God,

be the means of animating our zeal, and making trial of our faith.

*Alleluia* is a Hebrew word, which signifies *Praise the Lord* : it possesses such uncommon energy in its primitive tongue, that it cannot be transfused into any other language, in a manner equally short and expressive ; it is also indicative of an enthusiastic feeling, a transport of joy which it is impossible to render by any single word ; the church, therefore, has retained this, as well as the *amen* of the Hebrews. She has consecrated it to the expression of joy, and on this account she redoubles it on occasions of great solemnity, and suppresses it on days of mourning and penitence. Not, my brethren, that she dispenses on such days with the obligation of rendering to the Almighty the praise that is due ; she only interdicts those feelings of joy that should, on more appropriate occasions, accompany these expressions of praise. Thus in the weeks that precede the festival of Easter, instead of the *alleluia* at the commencement of her divine offices, she says : *Praise be to thee, O King of eternal glory*. In this she has conformed to the method which the Hebrews followed in their canticles. All the psalms of this nation were not preceded by the *alleluia* : she reserved this species of anthem for such only as were expressive of joy, such as commemorated some of the most remarkable events of their history, or reminded them of the mercies and the protecting providence of their God. Thus after the words, *My soul bless the Lord*, the prophet repeated the *alleluia*,

to testify that this was the language of his gratitude. This same exclamation preceded that beautiful canticle in which the prophet invites Israel to publish the goodness of the Lord : ‘ Praise the Lord, for he is bountiful, &c.’ We find it placed before some of the other psalms, but they are always such as express a grateful acknowledgement for blessings received. We may, therefore, regard this canticle as a lively expression of our gratitude ; and hence it is easy to conceive the reason why the church has particularly consecrated it to the paschal season :—that happy epoch, in which all the favours of God towards Israel were eclipsed by the prodigies which Jesus Christ wrought in the midst of his church. Compared with that which we sing on occasion of the victory of Jesus Christ over the power of sin, we may regard the *alleluia* which the Hebrews repeated, as a mere prelude to our canticle of gladness. It is for the same reason, that the church employs the *alleluia* in the Mass which she solemnizes with the greatest pomp at that joyful period ; that, at the paschal season, in particular, she introduces it at the beginning, the conclusion, and even between the different verses of the psalm that she applies to the mystery of the day. In this view, the *alleluia* may be regarded as a shout of victory, which resounds even to the depths of hell, and again bursts asunder those gates of iron which the prince of darkness strives to keep fast, in order to renew our captivity. Happy the Christian who feels the whole power of this energetic word, who chaunts

it in a spirit of faith, and enters feelingly into the sense which it contains !

That soul, for example, which frequents the temple, and assists at the holy sacrifice, with no other motive than to solicit a renewal of gratitude, an increase of confidence, faith, humility, and fervour, together with a spirit of circumspection against the many dangerous snares to which his own frailty exposes him, should sing the *alleluia*, because to him it is the shout of victory, it is the signal for the soldiers of Christ to rally round the standard of their chief:—such is the *alleluia* of the just.

The guilty heart, which is overwhelmed by the recollection of its disorders, and tormented by the violence of the passions ; which is dragged along by the weight of vicious habits, terrified at the rigour of the judgments that await its crimes, and induced to seek in the temple a healing balsam for its wounds, should sing the *alleluia*, not, indeed, with those feelings of joy which an irreproachable conscience inspires, not with that sweet confidence which is the offspring of conscious fidelity, but with that trembling hope, that mingled sentiment of fear and of love, which points to a God, the object of its homage, both in the character of an avenger and a father :—such is the *alleluia* of the penitent sinner.

The poor man, who is convinced that the humble condition in which he is placed, is one of the most signal proofs of the interest the Almighty takes in his regard, and one of the strongest pre-

servatives against an undue attachment to the things of this world, should sing the *alleluia* in a spirit of submission, convinced that he ought to praise God for the state of probation in which he is placed, inasmuch as His infinite wisdom knows how to draw from this trial, submission,—from submission, patience,—from patience, Christian hope—a hope that shall never be confounded:—such is the *alleluia* of the poor.

Let the rich man, if he possess a spirit of faith, be careful not to pass this canticle with thoughtless indifference; let him be in a disposition to praise God, not for his having lavished upon him the good things of this world, but for instructing him what use to make thereof; not for having multiplied his treasures and possessions, but for detaching his heart from the love of them; not for having bestowed a more than ordinary share of the blessings and enjoyments of the present life, but for having rendered these very enjoyments an occasion for continual self-denial:—in this spirit, the *alleluia* will be proper for the poor in mind and in heart.

This *alleluia*, my brethren, will be found to possess many charms, will prove an occasion of the most tender consolations, if, in the midst of our different trials and afflictions, we accustom ourselves to praise God for all things, to bless his holy name for the evils as well the blessings that he is pleased to send. Should sorrow oppress us, let us not imagine we are, on that account, less entitled to raise our voice and repeat with the church: *al-*

*leluia* ! In other words : may all the evils I endure, all the calumnies I undergo, all the injustice I experience, all the sorrows I feel, all the sacrifices I am called upon to make—may all these, O Lord, redound to thy greater glory :—such is the *alleluia* of the afflicted Christian.

Therefore, if this expression be not always in our mouths, let it, at least, be carefully treasured up in our hearts. In that case, we shall never hear it repeated without feeling a renewal of those dispositions which it is so well calculated to inspire ; we shall only pause from reciting it, with a view, in some degree, to reduce it into practice. For this *alleluia* is not merely of an inactive nature ; in order to convey a more forcible impression, it borrows the language of action—a language far more eloquent, far more expressive of praise, than the most beautiful and elaborate canticles. It is the language of a faithful Christian, when he renders homage and obedience to the laws of God at the expense of his ease and sensuality, in defiance of railery and contempt, unseduced by the bad example of surrounding scandal and prevarication, unshaken by the solicitations of a corrupt nature that is continually prompting him to evil : his actions, far more effectually than his lips, proclaim this *alleluia*, this canticle of praise. Such is also the expression of the docile Christian : for as often as he either suffers without murmuring, blesses his God in the midst of trials, recognizes in the evils of life the chastening hand of the Almighty, or studies by pa-



tience to render his afflictions salutary and meritorious, he acknowledges the sovereign dominion of the Almighty over his creatures; his very silence is an act of praise, by which he invites others to join in the homage that he renders to his Maker; his tongue is unemployed, but his works are renewing this *alleluia* during each moment of the day. Never, therefore, let us be wearied with repeating this canticle of praise, which is destined to be our chief joy and consolation through eternity; for, according to St. Augustine, one of the most delightful employments of the blessed will be to praise God without ceasing. Thrice happy theme, which shall never be interrupted by the sigh of exile, the burst of grief, the voice of fear, or the sob of anguish and regret! Thrice happy theme, from whose merit no sin shall detract, whose activity no languor shall weaken, whose fervour no duration shall be able to diminish! Thrice happy theme, worthy of that God who shall be its everlasting object, of the Spirit who shall dictate the expression, and of the Christian who shall experience its effects! The *alleluia* which we chaunt here below, is a mere figure—a shadow of that which can only display its true efficacy, and possess its full value in the abodes of eternity. Like children whom we lead to make their first attempts at speech, by habituating their organs to utter the softest and most easy sounds; thus the church merely undertakes to instruct us here below how to lisp this sweet and delightful word. We are assured, and must have ourselves

remarked, that this canticle contains a sense which is one day to make our hearts overflow with joy ; but were it given us here below to comprehend the mysterious import which this expression contains, and the many high consolations it is capable of imparting, we should from that moment conceive an utter disgust for all the false and unsatisfactory pleasures of the world, and feel a perfect detachment from all the frivolous amusements that captivate the heart of carnal man. How senseless would the joys of the world then appear, how insipid its pleasures, how unsubstantial its possessions, how cumbersome its honours, how wearisome and revolting its scenes of fictitious mirth, and riotous festivity ! Ah, my brethren, let us render ourselves worthy of eternally repeating this divine canticle, by chaunting it here below with the dispositions that it requires. In a disposition of confidence—for let us always remember that as often as we pronounce this word, we address a tender father, a gentle and considerate master, who takes a pleasure in loading us with his favours. In a disposition of fear—for while we sing the praises of the Lord in this land of exile, we are uncertain whether they are worthy of love or hatred. Does purity watch around our lips, does docility reign in our hearts, is deceit estranged from our tongues ? for thus only can we presume to celebrate the majesty of the Eternal, especially when we recollect that God has said to the sinner : ‘ How dost thou presume to publish my ordinances ? ’ In a disposition of hu-

mility—for God rejects the supercilious homage of the Pharisee, who, while he pretends to adore the Almighty with his lips, despises the poor publican in his heart. He is pleased with the homage of a simple soul, that is equally impressed with a sense of its own unworthiness, and of the majesty of him whom it adores. In a disposition of fervour and of love—for if the *alleluia* be only on our lips, if it strike as an empty sound upon our carnal ear, without penetrating even to the inmost recesses of the heart, alas ! so far from being in unison with the canticle of the saints and angels, it will, if heard at all by the Almighty, be heard as an insult, as the mockery of praise. On the contrary, a heart which truly loves, and whose love is neither divided by the creature, weakened by an attachment to external objects, nor blunted by a taste for sensual gratifications, feels, in singing the *alleluia*, a renewal of confidence, an overflow of holy joy : this simple expression conveys both to the mind and the heart of the fervent Christian, a pledge of present happiness, and a sure presage of those unalterable delights, in the full plenitude of which, and in the full liberty of the children of God, he shall chaunt the *alleluias* of eternity. Amen.

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#### ON THE GOSPEL.

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace.—EPIST. ROM. ch. x. v. 15.

**O**N that memorable occasion when Jesus Christ delivered his first instructions to the people, he

ascended a high mountain, where, having seated himself, says the sacred historian, he spoke to the multitude that surrounded him, of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. To him, therefore, belongs the application of these words of the prophet, since it is he alone who has truly announced the gospel of peace. Thus, the first words of this divine preacher, contain an assurance of happiness and consolation to those who are poor, humble, and persecuted. When we behold him instructing mankind to place their chief happiness in such things only as are afflicting to their nature, and revolting to their senses, we cannot suppress our admiration: but what gives additional interest to these first instructions is, that they are not confined to the time of his ministry here on earth. The gospel of peace, which is every day announced in the midst of the celebration of our holy mysteries, whether by the priest, when he officiates alone, or by the deacon, when this oblation is accompanied with greater solemnity, reminds us, that God is become our constant master in these lessons of eternal wisdom.

This was one of the most interesting parts of the Mass of the catechumens, as it is one of the most useful to the Christian, who dwells on it with a lively faith. This portion of the evangelical writings, preceded by the prayers of the day, the instructions of the apostles, and the verses that are selected from the psalms, and the writings of the prophets, represents that fulness of time, when the eldest born of the father of the family, after being

announced by his servants and ministers, comes in person to cultivate his vine, and sow the seed in his field. My brethren, let us examine with attention, all the ceremonies that accompany the gospel, and learn from the circumstances connected therewith, to estimate their importance.

All scripture divinely inspired is equally the word of God, and as such, is proposed by the church as the object of our veneration and respect, yet she is desirous, that a due distinction should be observed, between the writings of the prophets, the instructions of the apostles, and the gospel of Jesus Christ. She has at all times intrusted the reading of the other holy books to inferior ministers, who, under the eyes of the high priest, and in the assembly of the faithful, were honoured with the important commission of announcing to the people the truths therein contained. Out of respect to the ineffable sacrifice of our altars, she has decreed, that such portions of the sacred scriptures as have been selected by way of preparation for the more solemn parts of the Mass, should be publicly read by the sub-deacon—a minister of an order superior to that of reader. But the holy gospel, which emanated immediately from the mouth of Jesus Christ, requires from the church a more marked attention, and more striking ceremonies, in order the more forcibly to impress the minds of the faithful with the instructions which it conveys. The deacon—a minister who approaches nearest to the sacerdotal order, is charged with the office of delivering it to the people; he approaches

the altar, and takes thence the volume that contains these adorable truths. The altar is an emblem of Jesus Christ, this action therefore imports, that he receives these divine truths from the mouth of Christ himself, and that the faithful should have no hesitation in listening to them as the express manifestation of the will of heaven. At the moment the deacon ascends to the altar, methinks I behold Moses summoned by the voice of the Eternal to the heights of Sinai, to receive in the midst of thunders and lightnings the law which he was to deliver to the people. He falls prostrate at the foot of the altar and before the volume of the law, because he is conscious that man is unworthy to become the organ of eternal truth; that the tongue, by nature false and deceitful, is of itself incapable of fulfilling this awful function, unless it be in some sort changed by him who holds all hearts in his hand. ‘O Almighty God,’ says the deacon, ‘who didst purify the lips of the prophet Isaiah with a burning coal, cleanse my heart and lips; and vouchsafe of thy gracious mercy so to purify me, that I may worthily attend to thy holy gospel.’ If my heart be displeasing to thee, how shall I presume to speak in thy name? If my dispositions belie the truths that are given me to utter, how shall I dare to announce them to thy people? May thy mercy reclaim me in whatever I deviate from this divine law, in order that my heart may be enamoured of the truths that my lips pronounce, and that thy gospel—the glad tidings of salvation—may prove my own delight, e’re I pretend to proclaim it for the consolation of thy children!

This prayer which the church puts in the mouth of the deacon, and which she invites the faithful to recite with him, already indicates the august nature of this ceremony and the importance of this sacred function ; but the spectacle becomes still more interesting, when the deacon places the holy gospel upon his bosom, and falling on his knees before the priest demands his blessing upon the action he is about to perform. ‘ May the Lord,’ says the priest, ‘ be in thy heart, and on thy lips, that thou mayst worthily, and in a becoming manner, attend to his holy gospel.’ The deacon then proceeds towards the spot whence he can most easily be heard by the whole congregation, preceded by the incense, which is at once expressive of the efficacy of prayer, and of the agreeable odour of the virtues which the word of God diffuses through the heart. Lighted tapers are also borne before him, to remind the faithful that the Saviour who is about to address them, is the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world ; and the flame of this light is an emblem of that charity which his word is about to enkindle in our hearts. The deacon elevates the book, not only that it may be seen and honoured by all present, but also to show, that the system of divine morality from which we are instructed is of heavenly origin, and that truth, like its divine author, loses nothing of its sublime and majestic character, by being brought to the level of our limited capacities. The gospel is usually chaunted from an elevated situation, and although the reason appears too natural to need any expla-

nation, may we not even in this discover a mysterious motive? Does not the church intimate, by this practice, that these truths, all simple as they are, are placed above the reach of carnal and unassisted man; that to attain them we must rise superior to every consideration of flesh and blood; that while our heart is weighed down by the solitudes and the pleasures of this life, these truths may strike the ears of the body, but can neither make any salutary impression on the mind, nor infuse the grace of charity into the heart?

Authors who have treated minutely of the different customs of the church, have discovered motives of mystery and edification even in the position of the deacon; when, therefore, we behold, him turn to the north, let us direct our hearts towards Him who can soften their hardness, and restore them to vital animation by the flames of his love; and when the deacon commences, let us, in some measure, anticipate the instructions of the Almighty, by offering him an attentive ear and a docile heart.

The deacon next announces the name of the particular evangelist from whose writings the instructions of the day are taken: and it is worthy of remark, that although Jesus Christ committed to four of his disciples the charge of recording his actions and precepts, yet the church acknowledges but one gospel. They wrote at different times, in different places, and sometimes in different languages; they often vary in their manner of ex-



pression, and not unfrequently appear to disagree in their account of certain events and maxims ; but the church, to whom alone belongs the exposition of the word of God, points out so evident a concordance, and so perfect a connection, between the evangelical writers, that we may rest assured, from whatever evangelist the truth is taken, it always forms a *sequence*, a continuation of the holy gospel of Jesus Christ : and therefore we always answer ; *Glory be to thee, O Lord !* Glory be to thee, for dissipating the mist of our ignorance by the light of thy truth ; for consoling our sorrows by the unction of thy word ; for strengthening our weakness, by the help of thy saving precepts. With the same act of praise which marked the beginning of the gospel, it also terminates : *Praise be to thee, O Christ !* And what more copious subject for praise, than what this ceremony affords ? Not content to come in person upon earth, and form by his precepts and example a society of apostles to bring us forth by the ministry of his word, Jesus Christ was desirous that his saving truths should become our daily nourishment, so that, deprived of the means and opportunity of consulting those whom he has established to be our guides and directors, we might find in this volume of his precepts, examples to animate, and mysteries to exercise our faith ; promises to enliven our hope, rules to direct our conduct, menaces to restrain us from sin, and grace to make us love and practise what it prescribes. From this short exposition, my brethren, we may

draw two important consequences:—the first regards the manner of reading the holy gospel, which is publicly done during the celebration of our holy mysteries. From the various circumstances that attend the reading of the gospel, from the different prayers that precede, and the ceremonies that accompany it, we should conclude, that we ought never to assist thereat, but with a heart pure and exempt from all the defilements of sin, or at least without being penetrated with a sincere repentance, and a firm resolution to expiate our offences, and avoid them in future; that dispositions of fear, veneration, docility, confidence, and fidelity, are so many requisites, without which these prayers and ceremonies are void and ineffectual: of fear—remembering that it is a God who speaks to us, and that his word ought not to return to him without effect, but should be the rule of our conduct, as it is the standard of his judgments: of veneration—because the precepts which he enjoins are most holy in their nature; indeed that law cannot but be pure and without blemish, which has God for its principle and its end: of docility—because, independent of the right by which Jesus Christ is entitled to our obedience, his laws are so full of wisdom, and so well adapted to our necessities, that it would be the height of folly to reject them; of confidence—because the God who speaks to us, knows and loves us; he knows the clay from which we were formed, and consequently the dominion which our senses hold over our reason, and the flesh over the spirit:

he knows the necessity there is of restraining this flesh in its concupiscence, and regulating its appetites and desires : in fine, of fidelity—inasmuch as the sacred intercourse which Jesus Christ wishes to hold with us, will become barren and ineffectual, unless the truths he inculcates be listened to with submission, meditated on with fervour, and practised with zeal and delight.

Impressed with these truths, let us carefully examine our dispositions relative to the extent of these duties ; in so doing, I fear we shall find that we have often assisted at this ceremony with distracted minds, and hearts filled with languor and indifference.

I shall now pass to the second consequence, which will terminate this instruction : it regards the reading of this same holy gospel in the interior of our respective homes. It would doubtless be a subject of regret, if the church merely permitted her children to know the testament of their God in rapid and partial details ; happily her conduct is the very reverse. She has permitted these adorable truths to be translated into the vulgar tongue, she has placed the book that contains them in the hands of the faithful ; and is not this, in some degree, equivalent to a precept enjoining them to seek therein the daily nourishment of their souls ? Whence then arise the indifference and stupidity of so many Christians who never open this divine volume, never keep it in their houses ; who, so far from being practically acquainted with its precepts, are even

ignorant of its contents: the little interest they feel for the concerns of salvation, renders them insensible to the truths that conduct thereto. This disorder is truly deplorable: to this insensibility must we attribute that deluge of spiritual evils which inundates the world. Look at the general decay of faith, the licentiousness of manners, the almost total extinction of the spirit of religion and humanity; what are they but the natural consequences of a neglect of this divine volume? Men live without instruction, and act without principle; the necessary consequence is, that they die without hope or consolation.

If, till now, we have neglected this sacred book, let us immediately correct our error. Let us make some reparation for this abuse of the word of God, by applying to the study thereof in a spirit of humble docility: and, whenever the reading of some portion of this sacred volume is announced at the celebration of our holy mysteries, let us bestow an awful attention on this ceremony, that the precepts therein contained, by instructing, sanctifying, and animating us to the practice of justice here upon earth, may conduct us to the enjoyment of the sovereign truth in the realms of bliss. Amen.

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#### ON THE NICENE CREED.

He that cometh to God, must believe. ST. PAUL, *HEB.* xi. 6.

**T**HE church appears to have been penetrated with the force of this truth, when she introduced the

*Creed* into her preparation to the holy mysteries: it is a proof of the earnest desire she feels, that the faithful should approach this oblation in that spirit of faith, which produces a feeling conviction both of the majesty of Him to whom the sacrifice is offered, and of the mercy of that God, who has condescended to become a victim for us. In proportion to the sincerity and fervour of our faith, she estimates our worthiness to participate in this holy oblation, from which she rejects all such as hesitate in the belief of her various mysteries.

It is here, my brethren, that the first part of the Mass terminates, which was heretofore called the Mass of the catechumens. It is here that all those preparations end, by which the church seeks to instruct us in all the dispositions which the sacrifice requires. It is not the least interesting part of the solemn service. Indeed, nothing can be better calculated to move the heart, and induce it to bring to this only sacrifice of our religion, that sacrifice of the mind, by which all its powers are subjected to the light and guidance of faith. I will endeavour to compress within the narrow bounds of a single instruction, all the truths that are inculcated in this part of the Mass.

The church recites the symbol of faith immediately after the close of the gospel; nothing could be more appropriate, than that this exposition of faith should follow the doctrines and precepts which Jesus Christ has therein revealed. When the gospel is finished, the priest, in private Masses, re-

spectfully kisses the adorable volume that contains these doctrines of salvation, and at the same time says: *May my sins be effaced by the words of life which I have pronounced.* At solemn Masses, after observing the same ceremony, by kissing the sacred words to which the sub-deacon points as he presents the book, he begins his profession of faith by this answer: *I believe, from my heart, what my mouth utters.* I judged it necessary thus minutely to detail these circumstances, because they strike me, as being analogous to the profession of faith that immediately follows. After having said, in a low voice, to the minister who presents the holy Gospel, *I believe*, the priest immediately repeats aloud to all the faithful present; *I believe in one God, &c.* he thus invites them to join with him in a public confession of that faith, which he has been secretly making in their name.

A *symbol*, in the general acceptation of the term, implies a sign or mark, but when applied to matters of belief, it signifies a formulary or profession of faith. Even in the time of the apostles, the church had adopted a certain form in publishing the doctrines that were to be received by all the faithful; and this form is what we distinguish by the appellation of the Apostles' creed. In the course of time this formulary has varied according to circumstances, in order to counteract the various errors that have arisen against particular doctrines: that is, the church, without making any change in what appertains to faith, has added such expressions and ex-

planations as served to clear up those points that were contested by various heresiarchs. The *Creed* sung during the Mass, is the same that was composed by the general council assembled at Nice: it is also called the Creed of Constantinople, because in the general council held in that city, some slight alterations were made relative to certain errors that had recently sprung up there. The church imagined that this formulary, as being more explicit than that received from the apostles, would be still more proper to inspire Christians with respect for the doctrines it contains, and with fidelity to honour them in their practice. The faith which we profess is always the same, whether we recite the formulary transmitted to us from the apostles; whether, with the church, we sing the Nicene Creed, or follow the long exposition of faith which is attributed to St Athanasius, and recited by the church on all Sundays at *Prime*. In each of these formularies, we shall find the same mysteries, and we should profess them with the same sentiments of faith and veneration.

It is a custom ordained by the church, that the creed should be recited standing; this posture has always been regarded as expressive of the willingness we should feel to honour our faith, not only in word but in practice. We should be ever ready to march, if necessary, in defence of the Gospel, and manfully oppose such as presume to attack its veracity. Few Christians reflect on this duty; few feel solicitous to satisfy the obligations it imposes,

especially at a time when every truth is boldly called in question. It is only the enemies of the church who dare to arise and stand boldly forward, whilst the children of faith, either through ignorance or cowardice, sit and fold their arms in shameful indifference. Ah, let us never forget, that the moment in which we assist at the holy sacrifice, is, of all others, the most important to renew that firmness and constancy which our faith requires. Let this declaration, *I believe*, be ever on our lips, but more especially let it be engraven on our hearts; let us resolve to make our actions correspond with our professions; let no considerations induce us to belie the dignity of the situation in which the church places us when we make this public confession of our faith.

It is the custom for all to kneel at the moment the church announces the mystery of the incarnation, with a view, no doubt, to honour by this act of humiliation, the profound humility of Jesus Christ: for, according to the expression of St Augustine; ‘A God that is humble, should be approached only in humility;’ not in the humiliation of the body, but of the heart, which ought, at this moment, to be feelingly penetrated with the greatness of the sacrifice which a God was pleased to make, in order to secure our freedom from the bondage of sin; for he disdained not to take the form of a slave: *He was made man*. He condescended to become a man of poverty—he to whom all nature is subject; he was a man obscure and un-



known—he who claimed descent from the princes of Judah, and was established the King of nations; a mortal man—he who had never merited death by sin. Let every creature, therefore, abase himself at the idea of a mystery, in which, according to the church, a God, from the height of his glory, descended into the profound abyss of indignity and humiliation.

What heart-felt sentiments of veneration, confidence, humility and love, should accompany the recitation of this formulary of faith! I am not surprised, my brethren, that on her great solemnities, the church accompanies this public profession of her faith with such pomp and solemnity, and that, on these occasions, she causes all her ministers to kiss the holy Gospel. She wishes, by this custom, to teach the people that every truth proposed to their belief is contained in this sacred volume, and that the avowal pronounced by the lips of the minister, ought to be solemnly treasured up in the hearts of all the faithful; that to each truth, to each article of faith, all present should be in a disposition to answer with sincerity; I believe, from my heart, what my mouth utters. My heart believes it, because it takes the liveliest interest in this belief; because the surest and most animating hopes result from this belief; because each mystery that I profess is a pledge by which I am entitled to the most exalted, and the most consoling privileges: what I pronounce with my lips, I make a resolution to profess by my whole conduct.

How comprehensive, my brethren, is this word

*Confiteor, I confess*, which we repeat in the creed ; how expressive of the many obligations by which that Christian is bound, who is sincerely desirous of acting up to his professions ! There is not a single circumstance in life, in which he ought not to reduce into practice the sentiment contained in this single word. In conversation, he ought neither willingly to listen to suggestions' contrary to faith, nor to hazard any doubtful principles himself, but boldly and honestly to profess the truth ; in his reading, he should carefully avoid the works of such insidious writers, as either attack or misrepresent the principles of his faith ; in the societies he frequents, by keeping a strict guard against those who would sneer him out of his religion ; in his thoughts, which he should continually turn towards Him who is the object of his faith ; in his desires, which he should so regulate, as never to lose sight of those true riches—the good things of eternity which religion holds forth ; in his affections, which he should render in all things conformable to those of Jesus Christ. It is he who has taught us how to believe ; it is he who has also taught us never to separate the faith of the mind from that of the heart, or the avowal of our lips from the practice of our lives. He began by practising what he taught ; he never ceased to exercise the virtues which he recommended. In perusing his blessed life, who will not be obliged to confess that he has felt his heart more influenced by the actions than the words of his blessed Redeemer : by the latter

he pointed out the way, by the former he conducted us therein. By his precepts he taught us that we might be happy ; by his example he rendered us so. It is not, therefore, a barren devotion which the church seeks to inspire, by enjoining us to make this public profession of our faith ; she is desirous that he who bears the name of one of the faithful, should be so in deed and effect : faithful in the midst of his brethren, by the sanctity of his conversation, and the edification of his example ; faithful under adversity, by patience and submission, by his unshaken hopes in that better life which shall amply repay him for all his sorrows and sufferings in this ; faithful under temptation, by his firmness and constancy, by his detestation of sin, and his fear of offending him who is the supreme object of his faith ; faithful in the midst of the blessings and honours of this life, by his detachment from every thing that is perishable, by the discreet and holy use of whatever is lent him by Heaven, and by his wisdom in converting those riches, whose tenure is so precarious in time, into a prudent resource for eternity ; faithful by an universal detachment from the possessions of this world, by his unabating confidence in Him who watches over all his creatures with tender solicitude and inexhaustible mercy ; faithful, above all, in the midst of apostates, and the enemies of his faith, by opposing, with all his energy, the insidious efforts they are continually making to obliterate all sense of religion from the hearts of the weak and unthinking.

Such are a few of the many obligations enjoined in this ordinance of the church. My brethren, let us honestly confess, that we have seldom recited the *Creed* in these dispositions, and still more seldom recurred to these dispositions under the various circumstances wherein we should have honoured them in our practice. Jesus Christ has declared, that at the end of time scarcely a single spark of faith shall be found upon earth ; but remember, that he spoke not of that speculative faith which consists in a bare acquiescence to known truths, or a public avowal of their belief. Even to the consummation of ages, the church will find children who speak the same language. Even to the end of time, our temples shall incessantly resound with this canticle of confession ; *Credo, I believe* ; yet, in proportion as time brings with it a greater depravity of morals, in the same degree will every sentiment of true and genuine faith be extinguished in the heart ; and the church will have the bitterness to behold the greater number of her children either belieing their faith by their conduct, dishonouring it by their blasphemies, or betraying its interests by a base and criminal silence.

As for us, my brethren, let us strive to become a consolation to this our tender mother, by a lively faith which falters not in its belief ; by an humble faith, that relies not on the strength of its own reason ; by a submissive faith, that avoids all cavil and dispute ; by a sincere and active faith, that is always consistent with itself. Let us regard the

the appellation of children of faith as the most honourable of all titles, as in effect it is, by the union which it forms between us and the Almighty, and by the high privileges it confers, in rendering us the co-heirs of Jesus Christ; hence the church terminates the creed with these words; *I believe in the life of the world to come.* Yes, I believe in this future life; I expect it in all the fervour of hope; I demand it with all the energy that the spirit of God can inspire; I will dispose myself for the possession thereof with all the zeal and fidelity that the grace of God can form in my heart, and I will never cease to repeat here below the *amen*, which is expressive of the most ardent desire, till admitted to the realms of the blest, I can chaunt that *amen*, which will be an everlasting avowal of my love and gratitude to my God and Saviour. Amen.

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#### ON THE OFFERTORY.

In a contrite and humble spirit, let us be accepted. Dan. c. iii. v. 39.

**T**HE church is well aware that this, of all other dispositions, is the most pleasing to the Almighty; that he has often declared this in his sacred Scriptures, and assured us that he will never reject the poor in spirit and the humble of heart. Therefore, at the important moment in which the oblation of the sacrifice commences, she addresses her divine Master in these words of his prophet. She has already admonished us of this two-fold disposition in

the confession of sins which formed a part of the preparation to the holy sacrifice; but she particularly directs our attention to it in this part of the Mass, if we are desirous that this oblation, which, by its very nature, must be acceptable to God, since it is his only begotten Son who humbles himself in presence of his Eternal Father, should become profitable to us by the union of our dispositions with those of this divine Saviour.

My brethren, we are now entering upon a part of the Mass, which rises greatly in interest, since it forms, in some degree, an essential portion of the holy sacrifice. This subject teems with reflections, and were I disposed to enter fully into so copious a theme, it would furnish matter for several Instructions. But being compelled to keep within narrow bounds, I shall be careful to neglect none of the important ceremonies that compose it, but to draw thence such consequences as may conduce to practical utility. I must solicit a renewal of attention proportioned to the importance of the subject.

To form a just idea of the dignity and excellence of this part of the Mass, it is necessary to recollect, that formerly the church did not enter upon it till the catechumens had retired. Hence it was usual to speak of two kinds of Masses: that of the catechumens, which began at the entrance of the priest to the altar, and continued till the oblation, and that of the faithful, which commenced at the oblation and concluded at the dismissal, which the deacon announces to the people. This, therefore,

is properly the commencement of the sacrifice. All the prayers and lessons that have preceded it, can be considered as merely of a preparatory nature: this is the moment in which the church begins really to act, and to offer the victim. Nor has she any intention of offering, except in the name and presence of those who have either received and preserved the grace of God, or, if forfeited, have recovered it by subsequent repentance; since, independent of the catechumens, she also excludes those who are engaged in a course of public penance. And if, since the abolition of the severities of her earlier canons, the church withholds not this part of the Mass, in presence even of the most scandalous sinners, she does not the less, on that account, dispense with their keeping separate, at least in mind and heart, from an assembly of which their iniquities render them unworthy: she acknowledges no other right, whereby they are sanctioned to assist at these mysteries of holiness, than what arises from the liveliest sorrow and detestation of sin, accompanied with a sincere resolution of amendment.

This part, like all the rest, commences with prayer, because the church considers the fruit of all her religious exercises as dependent upon this holy practice. The priest repeats aloud; *Let us pray*; and immediately he recites a verse selected from some psalm, which is, at the same time, chaunted by the choir. The whole psalm was formerly recited; and, on occasions of great solemnity, it was many times repeated, on account of the successive

crowds of the faithful who flocked to offer their oblations. I have but a few words to say on the subject of these offerings of the people. We know, that in the early ages of the church, the faithful supplied the bread and wine destined for the sacrifice. To this they also added various other oblations, intended either for the relief of the poor, or the use of the ministers devoted to the service of the altar; and when these gifts had been blessed by the priest, they often carried a part to their own homes, and afterwards sent a portion thereof, in token of unity, to such of the faithful as were connected with them by ties of friendship or blood. This custom was religiously observed in the fourth age. St Gregory Nazianzen, St Augustine, and St Paulinus, recommended this pious interchange of religion and friendship, both by their writings and their example. They regarded it as the strongest mark of that union which should subsist among all the faithful, and as a powerful means of awakening their charity and animating their faith. This philosophic age may sneer at the simplicity of our forefathers; but, has the spread of piety kept pace with this boasted spread of illumination? We pride ourselves upon being wiser, but, alas! I fear we are only so in our own eyes.

Let us now proceed to examine the oblation in general. I shall reduce this important matter to four questions: Who is the offerer?—To whom is the offering made?—Who is it that is offered? And for what end is he offered?



Who is the offerer? In the first place Jesus Christ, who alone is a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisadec. He is the eternal Priest, the High-priest of good things to come, who, according to the apostle, having no need of offering for his own sins, is fully entitled to offer for the sins of the people, and sure of finding acceptance, in consideration of his obedience to the will of his Father, and of the honour that is due to his divine Person. As often as the holy sacrifice is offered, he renews, by the hands of the priest, those august functions which he continually exercises in Heaven, where he ceases not to offer his precious body as a ransom for sin, and his precious blood to efface its stains from the soul.

( Secondly, It is the church, who with Jesus Christ, and through Jesus Christ, offers the oblation. This sacrifice has become her own, by right of the union which Jesus Christ has been pleased to contract with her. She is the mystical body, of which we are the members, and Jesus Christ the head; and, by virtue of this title, she may be said to co-operate in whatever her divine Spouse performs. Like him she is pure and spotless; and through him she has acquired a right to present to the Almighty a living, holy, and unspotted Host.

( Thirdly, It is the priest also who offers in the name of the church. Taken from among men,—from among sinners, he is anointed with holy oil, and consecrated for this awful function. It becomes, in some degree, his sacrifice, by the right with

which the Lord has been pleased to invest him, of uniting his intentions with those of the Sovereign High-priest: and unworthy as are his hands, all defiled with the stains of sin, to elevate this divine Host towards Heaven, and present it to the eternal Father, yet is it accepted as a host of agreeable savour, because the Almighty is graciously pleased to consider his hands as those of the church, or of Jesus Christ himself.

Fourthly, It is the faithful also who offer by the hands of the priest, in the name of the church, and through the merits of Jesus Christ. It becomes the oblation of every particular Christian, by the union which it forms between him and his Saviour; and hence it is that he is marked with the holy unction in the sacrament of baptism. It is by virtue of this sacrament, that he is raised to the priestly order, not indeed to offer by his own hands, not to exercise any of the functions of this awful ministry, nor actually to contribute thereto, but, like his divine Saviour, to become an anointed of the Lord, and to enjoy the inestimable privilege of offering with him and through him.

With regard to the second question; To whom is the offering made? The church herself answers; To the eternal Father, in memory of the passion, resurrection, and ascension of his Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: in other words—that this sacrifice is an action which the eternal Father has operated for our salvation through the Son; an action by which we, as it were, remind the Su-

preme Being of the conditions of that covenant which he was pleased to make with his people, by offering a victim, whose blood flowed in his passion, who triumphed over the enemies of our salvation by his resurrection, and who, by his ascension, hath insured us a right to a place in his kingdom.

This sacrifice is also offered to the adorable Trinity, as an homage which is justly due and necessary, as well to atone for the outrage offered thereto by sin, as by way of thanksgiving for the inestimable benefit of our justification. In this sacrifice we render thanks to the Father, who has given his only Son for our ransom; to the Son, who has mercifully effected our reconciliation with the Father; and to the Holy Ghost, who, in the womb of the purest of virgins, formed him who is the victim in this august sacrifice.

But, in order to be fully acquainted with the nature of this oblation, let us consider who it is that is offered? It is a pure and spotless victim, a victim of propitiation, a victim for sin, a victim of thanksgiving, a pacific victim, a true holocaust:—in a word, he in whom every species of oblation is concentrated; he, of whom the various sacrifices of the old law were but so many figures; he, who according to the apostle, consummates by this single oblation the eternal sanctification of the whole world.

Who is it that is offered? The only Son of the Eternal, the splendour of the Father, the image of his substance, his Word, his eternal wisdom, the

**King of ages, the Ancient of days, the delight of angels, the joy of the saints ; thus we offer nothing to the Almighty that is unworthy of him, nothing that is undeserving his acceptance ; no species of homage could be more appropriate, or better suited to acknowledge his Sovereign Majesty, and our essential dependence.**

Who is it that is offered ? The First-born of the children of men, the Chief of the predestinated, the incarnate Word, the Son of Mary, the promised Emmanuel, the root of Jesse, the King of nations, our Chief, our Guide, and our Brother ; so that, all unworthy as we are, we may congratulate ourselves, says a Father of the church, on presenting the Almighty with something of our own—on offering ourselves with Jesus Christ, without the fear of being rejected ; because, by the union he has contracted with our flesh, the Word has bestowed an infinite value on the oblation which he has made of our nature to his eternal Father.

We will terminate this subject, by considering the motives for which the sacrifice of the Mass is offered. It is offered as well for the living as the dead, for the just as for sinners, for all our necessities both spiritual and temporal, present and future ; it is offered to obtain the peace of kingdoms, the prosperity of princes, the welfare of nations, the preservation of the fruits of the earth, the increase of the people of God, the extirpation of heresy and unbelief ; it is offered with a view to learn the will of Heaven, to obtain its light and guidance amidst

our doubts and uncertainties, as well as for the success of our undertakings; when we approach the altar with suitable dispositions, we sensibly experience the protection of Him who defends the widow and the orphan from the violence of their oppressors: This sacrifice is also offered to calm the fury of the elements, to obtain the blessing of salubrious and productive seasons, as also for the safety of those who travel by land or water; it is offered to obtain grace under temptations, and patience under afflictions; whoever, therefore, approaches this sacrifice in a spirit of docility and submission, will find arms to combat his spiritual foe, strength to sustain the assault, and unction to sweeten the bitterness of tribulation. We come with confidence to the altar, and bring every kind of demand that enters into the economy of salvation, and where, I may ask, is the superstition which our deluded brethren pretend to discover in this practice? We know that there is not a single object of petition which Jesus Christ is not willing to present in our name, and for which the church has not appointed a special prayer; yet, at the same time, we acknowledge, that it is one of the most dangerous prevarications, and repugnant to the very spirit of the sacrifice, to allow temporal blessings to engross our prayers, in prejudice to those that are eternal; to be more solicitous for those that tend merely to the comfort and convenience of the body, than for such as have the sanctification of our souls for their object: it would be a still more criminal prevari-

eation to presume to pervert this salutary oblation into a demand for such things as would endanger our salvation, and which, as the Almighty foresees their abuse, he only withholds in his mercy ; in a word, it would be the most horrible of prevarications to bring our feelings of injustice, of resentment, of revenge, to the foot of the altar, and to dare to render Jesus Christ a partner in guilt, by offering the sacrifice of the Mass for the prosperous issue of some unjust law-suit, or the success of some criminal project. And, would to God ! that this sacrilege were less frequent, and that Christians would learn to tremble at the idea of perverting the sacred object of this sacrifice ! Is it possible that Christians can forget, that he who offers it to his eternal Father, has taught us to seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, under the certainty that temporal graces will be the necessary consequence of this first demand. It is no small consolation to me to reflect that the persons whom I have the happiness to address, are too well instructed in the nature of their duty to give way to so shocking an abuse : yet they cannot feel less solicitous to enter fully into the object of this sacrifice, and to study the dispositions requisite to render it effectual. I shall not enter further into the nature of these dispositions, as I think they must be sufficiently apparent, from the reflections I have just made, while they will be still more clearly developed in the explanation we purpose to give of the prayers that accompany the oblation.

Let us conclude, my brethren, in the words I have chosen for my text, and beseech the Almighty that we may find acceptance, not in consideration of any merits of our own, but of the saving victim who is immolated for us ; not on account of any personal justice, but in consideration of our heart-felt sorrow for sin, and of that sacrifice of contrition and grief which we offer in union with that of Jesus Christ.

In fine, let us entreat for acceptance, not out of regard to the value of our offering, the profusion of our alms-deeds, or the splendour of our virtues, talents and acquirements, but on account of the contempt we manifest for ourselves, and for every thing that can tend to distinguish us in the eyes of men, as this is the only means of sharing in the profound self-abasement of Jesus Christ, the imitation of which can alone render us acceptable in the eyes of God.

Grant, O God, that these sentiments may always accompany us to the foot of thy altar ! An invisible hand restrains the proud from approaching it ; thine eyes are turned from those who look with complacency upon themselves ; turn away my eyes, therefore, that they may no longer behold vanity, that they may be fixed only upon thee, who alone art holy, just, great, and merciful, and wilt be so through endless ages. Amen.

## ON THE OBLATION.

A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.—

Psalm l. v. 19.

**T**HE moment, my brethren, in which Jesus Christ is about to offer himself on our altars, is the important moment to renew our confidence, and enter into such dispositions as may make our oblation partake of the efficacy of his sacrifice. These dispositions are inculcated in this passage of the Psalms, and the prayers employed by the church on this occasion are expressive of the same object. In our last Instruction we spoke of the oblation in general; it is our present purpose to enter into a more particular consideration of this subject, to meditate on the prayer that accompanies it, and to study the obligations it imposes. We shall find this prayer not less fruitful in instruction, and conducive to practical utility, than those we have already explained. The nearer we approach the essential action of the sacrifice, the more interesting does the matter become; it therefore demands, on your part, a renewal of fervour and attention. In our last instruction we considered the object of this oblation, and to whom, by whom, and in what manner it was offered, we will now say something of the *matter* of the sacrifice, which is of too important a nature to be passed over unnoticed. This subject will supply a fund of reflections, to which I call your most serious attention.



The sensible matter of the sacrifice no longer consists of such grosser victims as were suited to the carnal nature of the ancient law. In the institution thereof, Jesus Christ sought to represent not only the nature and the end of his oblation, but also the unity and the necessity of such an oblation. He has chosen bread and wine, as a visible emblem of his body and blood, adapted to the eyes of faith: an emblem truly sensible—inasmuch as bread, by its nature, its effects, and its universal utility to man, reminds us of that bread which truly descended from Heaven, and which is intended as the support of all the children of faith; without which the soul languishes in a hunger which nothing can appease, but with which she experiences the most perfect satiety: an emblem truly sacramental—since it is not merely a representation, but contains the reality of what is represented, which, by virtue of the words of Jesus Christ, operates that of which it is expressive: so that after the consecration, it is no contradiction to say that the species which we have offered are bread, and yet are not bread. This is an invisible bread, the bread of angels, the food of the elect; nothing remains of the material and visible bread, but those appearances which conceal from our eyes that spiritual food, that eucharistic bread.

When, therefore, my brethren, the priest takes the host, and raises it from the altar, in the attitude of oblation, let us transport ourselves in spirit to that interesting moment when Jesus Christ, after

taking bread, and rendering thanks to his Father, took wine also, and blessed it, assuring his apostles, that he would drink no more of the fruit of the vine, till he had entered into his kingdom. That kingdom is in the midst of us. From the first establishment of his church, Jesus Christ has not ceased to cultivate his favoured vine, and to collect its still increasing fruits:—of that vine, respecting which he said; ‘I am the vine, you are the branches: and you can bear no fruit, unless you abide in me.’ We here behold Jesus Christ established according to his own testimony, as the living bread, as the exhilarating wine which imparts vigour to all the virtues. Nothing, therefore, could be more suitable to form the essential and visible matter of the sacrifice, than bread and wine; and as these are the most common and most useful species of nourishment, they are the best possible representations of that only bread which can impart life, and of that only drink which can appease the thirst of the soul.

But why does the Latin church employ unleavened bread, whilst the Greek church consecrates with bread that has undergone this mixture? Does this diversity of practice, in no way affect the essentials of the sacrifice? Has the Latin church motives of sufficient weight to justify her adherence to this custom? It would be too long for my present purpose to enter into a detail of this dispute, which has been so long agitated, and which still unhappily divides these two portions of the king-

dom of Jesus Christ. It will be sufficient to know, that the difference which exists on this point does not affect the essentials of doctrine; that both churches agree in acknowledging Jesus Christ as really present under the species of bread and wine; that the church has not absolutely pronounced judgment against those who differ from her on this point; that the Latin church believes herself authorized to use unleavened bread, because it is one of those customs, whose origin we are unable to trace, and which are, consequently, venerable for their antiquity; that she conforms thereto, under the persuasion that she is following the intentions of Jesus Christ to the very letter; that the holy eucharist having been instituted at a time when the use of leaven was interdicted to the Jews, and when it was even forbidden to keep it in their houses, she believes, that in the use of the unleavened bread, she employs the same matter that Jesus Christ actually employed.—The church is, moreover, desirous to make the usage itself a subject of instruction. By thus excluding any mixture of leaven from the bread which is to be consecrated, she admonishes her children to purify their minds, and banish from their hearts all the leaven of sin; never to bring to the altar any affection that is repugnant to the sanctity and the purity of this sacrament: and, without condemning the practice of the Greek church, she requires that her children should, in every respect, adhere with fidelity to the discipline she has prescribed.

Wine, mingled with water, is equally employed

by both churches ; and I intend this mixture as the subject of my next Instruction, because it affords ample ground for the most edifying and the most useful reflections. Let it suffice to make this passing observation, that this two-fold species of bread and wine is so absolutely essential to the sacrifice, that the church considers it as null, till both these substances have been employed in the oblation.

At solemn Masses it is the office of the deacon to present both the one and the other, with a view to admonish us, my brethren, that the priest does not offer for himself only ; that he does not fulfil a ministry, whose effects are confined to himself alone, in exclusion to the rest of the faithful. The deacon, who holds, as it were, a middle place between the laity and the priesthood, is a representative of the people, and, by placing in the hands of the priest the substances that are to be consecrated, he, in some sort, by the hands of the priest, makes an offering in the name of the people. The priest elevates the host upon the patten or vessel intended to receive it, and, at the same time, raises his eyes towards Heaven, because it is there that God has fixed the throne of his glory ; it is there that the victim of universal efficacy offers a perpetual sacrifice to his Father ; it is from thence, that both the benediction which is to consecrate the host, and the sacred fire which is to consume the victim, descend. After raising his eyes towards Heaven, the priest again inclines them towards the host, because it becomes not man to fix an indiscreet and

presumptuous look upon his God ; if God permits him to raise his heart, from time to time, in prayer, he admonishes him also to enter often into himself, to study his miseries, and bewail his offences. All these dispositions are clearly pointed out in the prayer which accompanies the oblation : *Accept, O holy Father, almighty and eternal God ; accept what thou thyself hast bestowed, for we have nothing to offer which we have not received from thy bounty ; accept it, Thou who art the Father of all creatures, but canst have no need of their gifts, since thou art the author of all things ; accept, O thou that art holy, this most pure of all victims, this unspotted host ; O thou that art Almighty, be pleased to accept the wisdom by which all things were created ; O thou that art eternal, be pleased to accept her whom thou hast known from the beginning of thy ways ; it is she who is about to offer herself to thee ; and to officiate at this offering, she has chosen the hands of the most unworthy of thy servants, for it is equally made for my innumerable sins, offences, and negligences, as for the sins of the people. O Father, merciful as thou art holy, may this oblation fully correspond to the views of thy mercy, by imparting the full plenitude of thy benedictions to all that assist at this sacrifice. May it procure for all the faithful who are yet living, those graces that may insure their eternal salvation : may it accelerate the deliverance of such as are departed this life, which they can never obtain but by virtue of his sanctifying blood. Never may any fault of ours*

render this blood an unfruitful seed ; *may it avail both us and them unto salvation*, and prove the pledge and the first fruits of that blessed life which consists in knowing and loving thee eternally.

Let us never forget, my brethren, that it is in the name of all the faithful, as well as in his own, that the priest addresses these words to God ; taken from among men, he cannot, like his divine Master, lay claim to that inviolable sanctity, which alone could put him in a condition to offer the oblation for others, without needing it himself. He is at the head of those sinners, whose pardon he solicits ; and it pleases the Almighty that, in this awful function, he should always be ranked in the number of truly penitent sinners, and that his contrition should draw down upon his prayers that merciful regard which he solicits for his brethren. Remember, when you assist at the sacrifice of the Mass, that you owe the same sensibility and compassion to the officiating minister, which he feels for you ; that while he is entreating with ardour for the pardon of your offences, you, in return, should solicit the remission of his sins and negligences ; that to approach the altar, with a mind filled with prejudice and scandal against the minister, is to betray a sad ignorance of the spirit of this sacrifice. It is, alas ! but too common to behold priests enter the sanctuary, whose whole deportment bespeaks dissipation, and whose manners are unworthy of the sacred ministry ; the consequence of this is, that such of the faithful as are

acquainted with the failings of their pastor, conceive an aversion for piety itself, and not unfrequently fall into such habits of langour and distraction, as render the oblation, in which they should participate, of no effect, and this at the very moment that religion and faith are providing, in this very prayer, an adequate remedy for such kind of scandal. Earnestly intreat the Almighty, that he would purify the hands which are about to offer so holy a sacrifice, and that to the priest who is unworthy of this awful function, it may become the means of conversion, and of a sincere return to his God. Should a comparison between yourselves and your pastors, seem to incline in your favour, and tend to flatter the natural pride of your heart, fail not to descend into yourselves, and to recollect that the vices of the priest are no apology for the disorders of his people; that you are not thereby dispensed from the obligation of bewailing your personal offences; that the efficacy of the sacrifice does not depend upon the minister whom the church employs to offer it; in fine, that no one should approach the altar, but with a mind deeply impressed with a sense of his own unworthiness.

It is not unworthy of remark, that the priest, in speaking of his faults, distinguishes them by the terms sins, offences, and negligences; that is, in this form of expression, he comprehends all the iniquities that can render us culpable in the sight of God. Our sins—by which we understand such outrages against the divine goodness as the will ap-

proves; they are mentioned first, because, they render us the most criminal in the eyes of the divine Majesty. Our offences—that is, a multitude of prevarications of every kind, which, whether they be avowed by the heart and will, or be the pure effect of human frailty, always spring from a source of corruption, which is entirely our own, and, therefore, demand on our part repentance and expiation. Our negligences—that is, such omissions of every kind, as langour and indifference, joined to a natural love of ease, and a proneness to indolence, render so common. And who shall dare to pronounce himself excepted from this detail of our common miseries? If the holiest among the ministers of the altar are obliged, with justice, to confess that their prevarications *are innumerable*, what should be the feelings—what the conduct of the generality of the faithful, of that multitude of Christians, who neither think, speak, nor act, save in conformity to the dispositions of a heart, that is abandoned to every kind of imperfection?

And yet, can we help remarking, in the greater part of men, an air of dissipation, a character of insensibility, and, not unfrequently, a display of pride and presumption, which would rather lead us to suppose, that they were induced to approach the altar, more out of compassion for the miseries of others, than from any consideration of their personal necessities? Though covered with wounds, and not unfrequently with such as are of a far more dangerous nature than those of their neighbours, we



still see them busied about the trifling scars which they notice on others; they judge their neighbour, and pass sentence without hesitation, while this very disposition renders them still more unworthy of the mercy they should themselves solicit. Ah, my brethren, let us not be blind to our personal necessities! Elevated once upon the altar of the cross on mount Calvary, Jesus Christ still causes himself to be elevated each day upon our altars, by the hands of the priest; there he shows himself to his Father, covered with our iniquities, and solicitous that each one of us, charged with his own transgressions, should be elevated with him; that the contrition which he feels for all human-kind, should influence the heart of each one of those whom he represents. And woe to him who shall pretend to impose the whole weight of his duties and obligations on this divine victim, and refuse himself to participate in his groans and prayers! Stranger to the spirit of this sacrifice, his lot shall be with the unbeliever: guilty of sacrilege, by the insult which he offers to the holy sacrifice, he will thus add to the multitude of his offences, that other crime which offers the greatest outrage to the tender love of Jesus Christ, since it is marked with the basest ingratitude—the crime of rendering his oblation of no avail.

Thou hast declared, O Lord, that when raised on high, thou wouldst draw all things to thyself. If the weight of our iniquities oppress us, and bind us to the earth, do thou rend asunder these fatal bonds,

and grant, that by sorrow and contrition of heart, we may, at the moment of the oblation, draw nearer to thyself ! May thy divine Father, to whom thou dost present this oblation, find us victims worthy of his acceptance, touched with a sincere regret for past unworthiness, and animated with a holy desire of further advancement in the paths of sanctity. May the innumerable multitude of our offences be concealed from his eyes, by the sanctity, the obedience, and the charity of this victim of propitiation ; and may the fruit of thy oblation be productive of a life of holiness in time, and of a life of bliss unfading through eternity. Amen.

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ON THE MIXTURE OF WINE AND WATER IN THE  
CHALICE.

My delight is to be with the children of men.—Prov. viii. v. 31.

**W**HAT, my brethren, can inspire the bosom of Jesus Christ with this eagerness to dwell among us ? For it is to him that the church makes an application of these words. When he inspired his prophet to utter such language, could he be ignorant that men would meet these his charitable advances with nothing but ingratitude, insensibility, and contempt ? Was he not aware that he might come even amongst his own, and that they would know him not ; that even in the bosom of his church he

would find sinners frequenting his awful mysteries with the most criminal indifference, that oftentimes even the most efficacious means of salvation would be perverted to the ruin and condemnation of those for whom they were instituted? Did he not foresee all the outrages, all the profanations he should experience in the abuse of his sacrament? What, therefore, are the delights which he promises himself from his residence among men? This mystery of charity is unveiled in the sacrifice of the Mass, and particularly in the ceremony which is the subject of this day's instruction.

The priest adds a small quantity of water to the wine destined for the sacrifice: we purpose to consider the import of this mixture, and to offer a few observations, which, mystic as they may perhaps appear to some of my hearers, are not, I may venture to assert, remarkable either for boldness or novelty. It perfectly corresponds with the words which I have taken for my text, and, consequently, offers to the faithful, who wish to enter into the spirit of the sacrifice, important motives for comfort and edification. Let me intreat you, my brethren, to enter into these sentiments, while I proceed to explain these interesting truths.

Although the water which the priest mingles in the chalice, is not like the bread and wine an essential, yet it is become an indispensable matter of the sacrifice, since the church teaches us that she has derived this custom from Jesus Christ himself. The most ancient of the Fathers make a special

mention of it: St Cyprian and St Cyril strongly opposed those heretics who presumed to oppose this ancient practice; and it is easy to see, from the severity of their censures, that they considered a violation of this rite, as a direct attack upon the discipline of the church, in a point the most venerable and sacred.

From the various reflections which the holy doctors have made upon this usage, we may collect these important truths: First, That the water and wine are a figure of the blood which Jesus Christ shed upon the cross, when he had entirely consummated his sacrifice; Secondly, That this mixture represents the intimate union of our soul and body; Thirdly, That it recals to our mind an union still more ineffable, that of the word of God to our nature; Fourthly, That the alliance of Jesus Christ with his church, is, in some sort, renewed as often as the oblation of the sacrifice is repeated. In order to profit by these various Instructions, let us meditate with attention on the prayer that accompanies this ceremony.

*O God, who hast created human nature in so wonderful a manner, by uniting two substances of such opposite quality—a material and perishable body with a soul that is spiritual, immortal, and formed after thy image; and, above all, who hast reformed it in a manner still more wonderful, by the incomprehensible union of thy nature to our own—of thy sanctity and justice, to the weakness of humanity, and to the apparent participation of guilt; hast*

thou not, by this double prodigy, conferred on us the privilege of demanding something of a still more exalted and consoling nature? Yes, we pray, *that by the mystery of this water and wine, we may be made partakers of his divine nature, whose mercy inclined him to so wonderful an act of condescension, as to become partaker of our humanity; his whose very name announces this ineffable union: for he is Jesus Christ, our Lord, thy Son, who, with thee, in the unity of the holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth, world without end.*

Such, my brethren, in a few words, is the substance of the prayer which accompanies this mysterious rite: let us proceed to its application. We here return our acknowledgements to the Lord of the creation, for the state of dignity and honour in which he hath established man, by forming him with his own hands. Yet, at the same time, this very act of thanksgiving to God, cannot but remind us of the state of degradation in which we are plunged by sin; it cannot but remind us, that this miracle of our creation is placed in contrast with that miracle of pride, which, in one fatal moment, entailed guilt and misery on man and his posterity; that the first words of this prayer equally imply an act of reparation, as well as of thanksgiving to the Almighty, particularly, if in reciting it with the priest, we reflect that this nature, so admirable in its origin, scarcely retains even a faint resemblance of its former dignified and godlike character. Where, indeed, is that intelligence

which man received from his Creator? We are abandoned to a state of ignorance, the most profound and humiliating. Where is that perfect subordination which existed between the body and soul, when the material part followed, without opposition or revolt, the rational dictates of the spirit? For, by concupiscence, we are subjected to the most galling, and the most painful of all servitude—the law of the members over the mind. What is become of that dominion over every creature, with which God had invested man, whereby he could, at his pleasure, render them subservient either to his utility or his delight, while nothing around him was obnoxious, either to the health of his body, or the tranquillity of his mind? But now, how sad the contrast! he is assailed by a thousand different evils and infirmities; he disengages himself from one misery, only to run head-long into another; he can neither remedy the ills, nor ward off the woes, that menace him, in any other way, than by submitting to a state of universal dependence.

What, in fine, is become of that right to immortality, when, by a miracle of providence and of mercy, a body, material and perishable in its nature, was associated to the privilege of spirits, and was to subsist, without alteration, as long as the imperishable soul to which it was united? And what is now our lot—a life, short as it is miserable, conducts us to a death at once shameful and inevitable; and for this very life, unhappy and unsub-

stantial as it is, we render thanks to the Almighty ! And why ? Ah, it is, that if, through our fault, existence is reduced to so small a number of days, and exposed to such an infinity of ills, it may, in the designs of Heaven, entitle us to partake of a resurrection still more admirable than our creation itself. This is the second prodigy of Almighty love, for which we thank our God in this prayer.

Yes, this consoling reflection is sufficient to dissipate all our sorrows, and alleviate all our regrets : Faith teaches us that we have lost nothing ; that the reparation made by Jesus Christ for mankind is so perfect that the Fathers, and particularly St Ambrose, have not hesitated to call the sin of Adam a happy fault : *O felix peccatum!* Happy, indeed, since it has been the means of procuring us a Redeemer.

It is here that the comparison becomes consoling to the Christian, and merits, on his part, the most lively return of gratitude. He feels no regret at beholding the union between his soul and body dissolved—a union that has been the unhappy cause of all his miseries ; but he recalls to mind, with feelings of joy and gratitude, the union of the Word with our nature, of a God with our humanity ; in this happy union, he beholds an inexhaustible store of privileges and blessings, to which his primitive innocence could never have entitled him. By creation he was the work ; by redemption he is become the child of God : before, he was entitled to but a portion of the inheritance of the Word ; now, he is become the brother of the Son

of God himself, and the co-heir of all his rights: in his former capacity, he was far inferior to the happy spirits; in his present condition, he enjoys, by the union of a God to his nature, an advantage which the angels never possessed. Again I repeat it; O happy, thrice happy fault! infinitely worthy of our regret, when we consider the infinite outrage that it offered to God, and the deep wounds which it has left in our souls! infinitely worthy of our gratitude, when we consider the efficacy of the remedy that has been provided for these wounds, the infinite honour which we render to God in Jesus Christ, and the full and entire satisfaction with which we requite all our offences through Jesus Christ! Admirable satisfaction! exclaims St Augustine, where to heal so great a malady, so great a physician has descended from heaven: Ineffable reparation! whereby every thing dishonourable to the Deity is requited; every thing degrading to man is amply compensated and re-established in its former dignity. Happy expiation! from whose blessed effects results another kind of union, which must excite the most lively sensations of veneration and gratitude—that of Jesus Christ with his church, represented under this mixture of water and wine.

: ‘O you,’—exclaims St Cyprian, writing against those heretics who offered the chalice without observing this mixture—‘O you, who offer only wine, do you reflect that water is an emblem of the people, —an emblem to which St John alludes in his Apocalypse, where he likens the people to a flood of



many waters ? Do you reflect on the consequences of this departure from an established custom of the church ? You separate, in some measure, the head from the members,—Jesus Christ from his people. As it would be contrary to the essence of the sacrifice to offer nothing but water, since, in that case, the people would be separated from Jesus Christ ; in the same manner, it would argue no small degree of temerity to offer the wine without adding the water, which in some measure would be to leave Jesus Christ without the people, whom he has redeemed at the price of his blood.’ From these reflections of St Cyprian, it follows, that as often as the priest mingles water in the chalice, he represents the union which Jesus Christ has condescended to contract with us, and, at the same time, admonishes us, by this mixture, of the important part which we bear in this oblation. As after the mixture, this water seems to form but one and the same substance with the wine, without any possibility of being again separated ; and, as without weakening the flavour or power of the wine, it borrows all its strength and virtue ; in the same manner, the faithful Christian, who is united to Jesus Christ in his sacrifice, becomes identified with his divine Master, and can no longer be regarded as separate from him.

As often, therefore, as this august sacrifice is offered, the church beholds the accomplishment of the demand which she makes to God in the prayer we have this day endeavoured to explain, since

Jesus Christ renders us as effectually the partakers of his divinity, as himself was of our humanity, in which he deigned to invest himself; and if no term can be found adequate to express the wonderful mystery of the Word made flesh, there is none capable of conveying a just idea of that prodigy of love which he operates for man in the sacrifice of our altars. How ravishing would be the spectacle, could the eyes of the body but catch a glimpse of what is passing at the altar during the action of the sacrifice! It is there that the church, the spouse of Jesus Christ, beholds the celebration of her mysterious alliance with her celestial bridegroom; it is there that she beholds those bonds of love cemented, that unite her to the Lamb. Indeed, it was by rendering himself partaker of our humanity, that he chose this spouse, and received her to an union with himself; but this spiritual alliance could only be consummated by admitting her to a participation of his divine nature, and this is effected in the august mystery of our altars.

Under this spiritual view of the subject, my brethren, let us no longer regard this mixture of wine and water, which the church employs in the sacrifice, as a mere unprofitable ceremony. On the contrary, let us take advantage of this circumstance, as a means of promoting our spiritual union with Jesus Christ. Let us, in some manner, make an offering of our entire humanity—that is, of a pure body, and a docile spirit; of a heart that is fervent and animated, of a mind that is upright, and a

will that is sincere. Let us prepare to receive the full plenitude of his divinity, by exciting ourselves to the practice of all those virtues of which he is the principle, the model, and the end, and which he himself will crown in eternity. Amen.

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#### ON THE USE OF INCENSE AT THE ALTAR.

And another angel came, and stood before the altar, having a golden censor. Apocalypse viii. v. 8.

**T**HE subject of my present Instruction is a ceremony of which the faithful are daily spectators, and yet whose spirit they scarcely ever comprehend. The use of incense is very frequent in the church; yet this use is not confined exclusively to our religion, for the pagans are accustomed to burn perfumes before their idols. This practice was also scrupulously observed in the Jewish religion. The earth opened and swallowed up alive two Levites, the children of Aaron, for presuming to fill their censors with unhallowed fire. In the magnificent description which St John has given us in his Apocalypse of the throne of God, and the altar of the Lamb, frequent mention is made of the incense which ascended, without ceasing, in honour of the Eternal, and which he assures us was nothing less than the prayers of the saints. We shall see that the incense employed by the church is expressive of the same object, or rather is but a figurative re-

presentation of a perfume still more precious in the sight of God. Oh, that henceforward we may observe this ceremony with a more lively faith, may behold it renewed with a devotion more tender, and a fervour more permanent, and be penetrated with a more profound veneration for all the ceremonies that accompany the oblation of our awful mysteries !

As my principal object in this series of Instructions, is rather to edify the piety, than gratify the curiosity of my hearers, I shall pass in silence over many of the usages still retained by the church, as well as the different variations these usages have undergone. Let it suffice us to know, my brethren, that the use of incense at the altar is of very ancient date in the church ; that the perfume which it exhales, is emblematic of the odour of good works ; and that the clouds of smoke, which are wafted from the censor, represent the elevation of our hearts to God in prayer. The church does not merely confine this ceremony to the moment of the oblation, but employs it in many of her different offices. She perfumes the altar, because it is a figure of Jesus Christ ; she perfumes the holy Gospel, because it contains the words of Jesus Christ ; she perfumes the priests and Levites, because they are the ministers of Jesus Christ ; she perfumes the relics of the saints, because they are the precious remains of the members of Jesus Christ. The same ceremony is performed to the choristers, who chaunt the praises of the Almighty, because they

are as so many organs employed by the church, to render, through Jesus Christ, a homage of prayer and praise to the Eternal. Sovereigns and temporal princes are saluted with the same mark of honour, in consideration that all authority comes from God, and should, therefore, be honoured in those who are here below, the living images of the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. Let us not, therefore, form a mistaken judgment of things, but remember that all these honours are relative, and must ultimately be referred to him, to whom glory, honour, and dominion, alone are due. Woe to that man who shall presume to appropriate them to himself, as though he were the ultimate object of honours that are referable to a higher source! This ceremony is observed in all the different offices of the church; but particularly in the sacrifice of the Mass, of all her offices the most august and holy: in the celebration of these awful mysteries, her use of incense is very frequent, and proportioned to the particular solemnities of the occasion.

Thus, on solemn festivals, the priest, on his first entrance, perfumes the altar, which ceremony he immediately repeats after the oblation: an explanation of the one will serve to make us enter into the spirit of the other.

The church is careful to bless the incense every time she has occasion to employ it, to give us to understand, that nothing profane can be admitted into the worship of God; and that we ourselves are unworthy to participate therein, till we have sought,

by prayer, to draw down those benedictions that alone can render us worthy of this honour. ‘ May he bless thee,’ says the priest, ‘ in whose name thou are about to be consumed :’ such are the words in which the prayer, by which this blessing is imparted, is generally expressed. But, in blessing the incense after the oblation, the priest makes a more solemn and expressive prayer. He invokes the arch-angel St Michael, the chief of the celestial host, that angel, who, according to the testimony of the scripture, stands at the right hand of the altar of incense to receive our prayers, in order that the homage which we render upon earth, may be united to that which is offered in Heaven, and as the sacrifice is but one, may form but one and the same act of thanksgiving and love.

Oh, how august, then, must be the function of the priest, how holy, how awful ! He becomes, under these circumstances, a visible angel upon earth ; like these celestial spirits he is placed near the altar of incense ; like them he holds the censor in his hand. This censor should be of the purest gold : —that is, his heart should be purified from all the dross of sin. The fire which burns in his hands, should be an image of the active flames of charity that glow in his bosom ; the perfumes that he employs, should be composed of the prayers and grateful homage of the faithful, but such homage as is of a durable nature—such homage as is animated by the constant exercise of good works. How much reason, therefore, have they to tremble, when

in the discharge of this awful function, their lips are not in unison with their hearts, when the deadly exhalations that arise from their passions, intermingle with the hallowed perfumes that breathe from the prayers of the just ! How greatly do they stand in need of the prayers of the faithful who are witnesses of this ceremony, to implore the bounty and interest, the patience and mercy, of God in their behalf ; whilst they, in return, are, by this act of homage, seeking to draw down upon their people a spirit of faith, of love, of grace, and of reconciliation !

Nothing could give us a stronger idea of the practical instruction to be derived from this exterior rite, than an attention to the different actions of the priest in performing it. Stationed in the centre of the altar, he begins by incensing the bread and wine intended for the consecration ; and, in the few words that accompany this action, it is easy to comprehend its whole efficacy : ‘ O Lord, let this incense, which thou hast blessed, ascend up to thee ; mayst thou look with a favourable eye upon the gifts we are about to offer, and may thy mercy descend upon us, in return for the homage we render thee.’ The priest now descends to the foot of the altar, and, kneeling, addresses the Almighty in these words of the 140th psalm : ‘ Let my prayer, O Lord, ascend like incense in thy sight.’ Is not this ceremony calculated to fulfil, to the very letter, the precept laid down by the Holy Spirit, of preparing our souls, before approaching God in

prayer? And what more necessary demand could precede this holy exercise, than that our prayer should be rendered like incense, whose perfume is ever wafted towards Heaven? When oppressed with weariness and langour during the hours of prayer, why not employ these words to draw down a spirit of fervour and recollection? O my God, let not my soul be weighed down by the objects of sense that encompass it; let it be borne upwards towards thee on the wings of prayer! It is from thee that the spirit of genuine prayer descends; no homage of ours could prove acceptable in thy sight, unless inspirited and sanctified by thee. Draw my heart towards thee, like the ascending smoke of incense exhaled from the censor.

After reciting the words of the above-mentioned psalm, the priest ascends the steps of the sanctuary, and incenses the different parts of the altar. It is to the cross which occupies the centre, that he renders the first homage; and as the church has deposited the relics of some saint beneath, or even around the altar, the priest performs the same honour in the different places destined for these precious relics of the friends of God. ‘May the lifting up of my hands,’ continues the minister, ‘be as the evening sacrifice!’ During the sacrifice of the Mass, the hands of the priest are almost always elevated, which posture is a kind of admonition to the people to raise up their hearts towards Heaven. The priest, therefore, prays that this mark of external homage may produce in him, and in all pre-



sent, an interior effect; that, joined to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, this oblation may be rendered acceptable in his sight, not like the evening sacrifice offered in the old law, but like that which Jesus Christ offered upon the cross, and of which the sacrifice of the Mass is at once representative, and forms an actual continuation.

‘ O Lord,’ continues the minister, ‘ place a guard on my mouth, and a gate of prudence before my lips !’ Indeed, what fruit can we expect from our prayers, if our tongue be defiled by profane discourse, and our lips are suffered to utter vanity and lies. The mouth of the impious, says the prophet in another place, is like an open sepulchre, which exhales nothing but the odour of infection and death; but the Almighty demands that our prayers should be as a grateful perfume ascending to the throne of his Majesty. These words are a proof, that this ceremony does not less interest the people who assist thereat, than the priest who officiates. If the latter should bear knowledge and truth upon his lips, the former ought to banish thence every thing that savours of iniquity. It is, therefore, not only in his own name, but also in that of the people, that the minister continues;— ‘ That my heart may not wander after works of malice, to seek excuses in sin :’ a disposition totally repugnant to the spirit of prayer. Seek the Lord, says one of the prophets, in the sincerity of thy heart : to approach him with a double and deceitful heart—with a heart that is too proud to

make a candid confession of its faults, and seeks to palliate their enormity—is to advance rapidly in the path that leads to hardened and final impenitence. This would be the most dreadful misfortune that could befall us; a disposition like this would be the very opposite to the spirit of the sacrifice that is about to be offered. It is under this impression, that the priest, in replacing the censor in the hands of the deacon, concludes with these words; ‘ May the Lord enkindle within us the fire of his love, and the flame of everlasting charity !’ Nothing, in effect, but the fire of charity could purify the soul thus tainted with hypocrisy and dissimulation, and soften this spirit of obduracy and impenitence, from which the priest prays that himself and the assistants may be free, in order worthily to celebrate these mysteries of holiness.

From those reflections, we may conclude, that the use of incense, in the functions of religion, should henceforth be regarded, not as a mere barren ceremony,—as a brilliant spectacle intended to attract the gaze of the curious; but, that whenever the church observes this rite, she does it with a view to remind us of the necessity of prayer, and of those dispositions that alone can insure us the advantages of this holy practice; that the incense offered after the oblation of the bread and wine, is calculated to inspire these sentiments in the most striking manner; that the duties, common both to the priest and the faithful, are clearly traced out in

the prayers that accompany it; in fine, that it is useful to recite them with the priest, in order that the frequency of the repetition may familiarize the heart with the expressions which the mouth utters.

Ah, my brethren, if we were studious to form our minds to habits of reflection and meditation, how many other sacred usages should we find, to whose spirit we are strangers; yet these, like the present, would be found equally pregnant with instruction, equally proper to nourish our piety and strengthen our faith, to add energy to hope, and animation to charity! We should feel an increase of courage to withstand those numerous votaries of incredulity and impiety, who respect nothing, because they have no inclination to study the nature of what they condemn; we should find motives for edification and hope, in what furnishes them with subjects for raillery and satire. Then should we behold a revival of that simplicity, for which our forefathers were distinguished, and which is always on its guard against that wisdom which vainly puffs up the heart, and that philosophy which obscures the light of faith. We should possess wisdom with sobriety; learning with humility; the gifts of genius with simplicity; a zeal and ardour in the service of God, tempered with all knowledge. I shall consider the end proposed in the present Instruction, as fully attained, if I have but succeeded in inspiring you with a laudable curiosity to study all the rites and practices which the

church enjoins all her children to observe. You will find in this curiosity itself, if well regulated, principles to direct your conduct in time, and an increase of ardour after the good things of eternity. Amen.

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#### ON THE WASHING OF THE HANDS.

I will wash my hands among the innocent, and will compass thy altars,  
O Lord. Psal. xxv. v. 26.

**T**HE church has selected the whole psalm, from which this verse is taken, as being the best calculated to point out the dispositions with which this ceremony is intended to inspire the faithful. We shall consider this subject in three points of view : 1st, As to its spirit, and the motives that led to its institution ; 2dly, As to the particular circumstances in which it is observed by the church ; and, 3dly, We shall offer some short comments on the psalm by which this ceremony is accompanied.

Be not surprised, my brethren, if at different times we recur to the same dispositions, and pursue the same train of reflections ; in this we have the example of the church, who, in her various rites, inspires the same sentiments and awakens the same recollections. Can we ever be weary of hearing that, of which we ought never to be wearied in the practice ? Is it not with truth, as with God himself, who, though the Ancient of days, is yet the Sovereign and unfading beauty ; who was

revealed from the commencement of time, and shall ever be revealed to the eternal felicity of such hearts as are sincere and well-prepared? No, the Christian who loves his religion, will never be wearied with hearing it spoken of, and should an involuntary disgust, at any time, overspread his mind, he will always find a sufficient resource, in his faith and humility, for a renewal of fervency and zeal. I invite you to enter with earnestness into these dispositions, in order to profit by the present Instruction.

We will first proceed to consider the subject of our present Instruction with reference to its spirit, and the reason of its institution. The church never ceases to bring into our view those dispositions of innocence and purity, which this holy sacrifice requires; and it is equally her object, in the present instance, to remind the priest himself of this indispensable duty, and of the obligation imposed on him of enforcing it on the minds of his flock. ‘Purify yourselves,’ said the Levite to the ministers of the Old Testament, ‘purify yourselves before ye touch the vessels of the Lord.’ Hence those lavers that were placed at the entrance of the temple, and even close to the altars; hence the scrupulous attention of all who administered at the ancient tabernacle, that nothing impure or defiled should be mingled with the oblations; hence those rigorous laws and penalties which interdicted all entrance to the temple, and all participation in the sacrifice, not only to adulterers and homicides, but even to

those who had experienced any involuntary defilement. Yet this law, with all its rigid exactness, was but a mere type and figure of the future and more perfect law. Less attached, than the synagogue of old, to these exterior purifications, the church of Christ does not, however, neglect them. Her chief care is to convince us, that purity of heart is what the Almighty demands; yet she is not inattentive to that external propriety which decency requires. With this view she ordains, that the vessels which are used in the oblation, should be of pure metal, and of a form that admits of their being easily cleansed; and that the linen, which serves either to purify the chalice, or to receive the spotless victim, should itself be exempt from stain; with this view, she prescribes the utmost exactitude to her ministers on this external point of discipline; and, to evince their fidelity in this regard, the bishops invested the arch-deacons of their respective cathedrals, with the charge of visiting distant churches, to ascertain that due attention was observed in these particulars, reserving to themselves the care of enforcing this decency with respect to the sacred vessels and the ornaments destined for the sacrifice, among such of the clergy as resided near them, and were, consequently, under their more immediate inspection.

If, therefore, this exterior purity in the ministers of the altar, who are properly the vessels of the sanctuary, be so indispensable, how culpable would be the conduct of that priest who should presume to

enter the holy place, without purifying his hands, on which the Holy of Holies is to repose, and his lips, which the Lamb without spot is about to sanctify by his presence! Conveniencies are prepared for this purpose in the place where the priest vests himself, and here he washes his hands while reciting a prayer, which we have explained in a former Instruction. But, in addition to this, the church enjoins him to wash the extremities of his fingers after the oblation, and before the canon of the Mass, in order that this fresh purification may immediately precede the action of the sacrifice, and that he may consummate the holy mysteries with an inviolable purity. Such is the motive of this ceremony; we will now consider the manner of its observance. It is on the Epistle-side of the altar that the priest washes his hands; a custom that is founded on the form of the ancient churches, for this side of the altar was more convenient to the inferior ministers, as being near the place where the vessels and other things necessary for the service of the altar were kept. But, in observing this practice, the minister should never forget that the least stain of sin is a sort of indignity, which, if it do not entirely exclude him from a participation in the holy mysteries, at least requires a sincere feeling of contrition and sorrow. The remembrance of his negligences and infidelities, should accompany him to the side of the altar. He should lament to find himself still so weak and feeble, when called to participate in the Holy of Holies. He

washes only the extremities of his fingers, because he should be in the same disposition with the apostles, to whom, at his last supper, Jesus Christ rendered this honourable testimony; *Ye are pure*: yet, notwithstanding this purity, it was deemed necessary to wash their feet. Therefore, following the idea of the masters of a spiritual life, this extremity of the fingers may signify those remains of sin which our weakness renders unavoidable, which are fostered by ignorance, disguised by self-love, and multiplied by our natural inconstancy, and into which, though we daily bewail them, we daily fall, through the natural effect of human frailty. And though these lesser transgressions neither deprive us of a state of grace, nor preclude our entrance into the sanctuary; still they weaken charity, diminish our confidence, and add to our natural dread in approaching these mysteries of holiness—mysteries so awful in their nature, that they should be entrusted only to saints and angels. At this moment, therefore, retire with the priest to the side of the altar,—renew that heart-felt avowal of your sins which you before made, and join with him in this purifying ceremonial, by detesting, with all the sincerity of your heart, whatever is displeasing to the divine Majesty, and by entreating him to distinguish your cause from that of the impious, who, according to the testimony of scripture, swallow down iniquity like water; who become so familiarized with guilt, that, having once begun, they are unable to set any bounds to their



prevarications. The timid soul is solicitous to avoid every thing that can render her disagreeable in the eyes of her heavenly Spouse; the slightest weakness into which her nature may betray her, is capable of exciting that spirit of sorrow and compunction, which the sinner never experiences, even in his greatest disorders.

Such, my brethren, is the instruction to be derived from the *manner* in which this ceremony is observed; nor is it difficult to discover its object, and the dispositions of which it is expressive. It will be at once curious and instructive to mark the different gradations by which the church seeks to conduct the priest and his assistants towards the perfection of sanctity. She is desirous that certain preparations should precede our entrance into the sanctuary, and it is by the sacrament of penance that she introduces those who may have been guilty of more grievous and wilful transgressions. A lively sorrow, accompanied by sincere resolutions of amendment, is what she requires in this first preparation: it is only when we come purified from the laver of penitence, that we can present ourselves at the altar, in a disposition of holy confidence. In any other ceremonial of religion, she would doubtless be contented with this precaution, but when her children are called to a participation of sanctity in its very essence, the least weakness becomes a subject of fearful importance. Before beginning any prayer, or applying themselves to the meditation of any truth, the minister, and the

faithful who surround him, prostrate themselves at the foot of the altar, and acknowledge, in the bitterness of their hearts, that they have offended—exceedingly offended ; that they need all the indulgence, and all the mercy, of a God, who has declared, that he is slow to anger. It is only after this sincere acknowledgement, that the church permits her ministers to ascend to the altar, and the congregation to follow him thither, still soliciting the remission of their sins, still acknowledging their negligences to be numberless, and their offences infinite. If the priest prepares to read, and the people to listen, to the holy gospel, this prayer is always repeated ; ‘ Cleanse my heart and my lips, O Lord.’ At the conclusion of this reading, the remission of sins is still the subject of petition : ‘ May our sins,’ says the priest, ‘ be blotted out by the words of the holy gospel.’ In a word, the minister, either in his own name, or that of the people, always acknowledges himself guilty ; incessantly solicits mercy and indulgence, and concludes by washing the extremities of his fingers, fearful lest, in spite of all his precautions, some secret weakness should still lurk behind, unknown and unrepented. Could the church carry her precautions farther ? Can we, in order to conform to her views, and enter into her spirit, testify too much respect and attention to those adorable mysteries ?

But it is not sufficient merely to study the nature, and enquire into the object, of the ceremony observed by the priest in this part of the Mass ; in

order to enter fully into the subject, we must meditate upon the words which the church has chosen to accompany this observance. But, in explaining this psalm, and in considering the relation it bears to the present ceremony, I should not so much attend to the literal sense in which the royal prophet pronounced it, as to the figurative allusion it bears to Jesus Christ, as well as its spiritual reference both to the priest and the congregation. It is in this last sense, particularly, that we shall find matter for edification; for, by meditating on the psalm in this view, we shall, perhaps, discover that this ceremony may be made conducive to great spiritual utility.

Guilty, but too often, of repeating this prayer through mere custom, do we not frequently experience the same langour and indifference, which accompany the recital of the other prayers, which the church has chosen with so much judgment, and arranged in her various offices with so much wisdom? May I indulge the hope, that the meditation we are about to make, may afford motives for reciting them with greater faith, unction and efficacy!

The present psalm, my brethren, was composed by David, and is strongly expressive of the situations to which this prince was reduced, by the revolt of his son Absalom. The royal prophet had reason to demand, with confidence, that God would separate him from the wicked; who, by their impiety, had drawn down the anger and the chastise-

ments of the Lord; that he had always avoided their society, was shown by his marked attachment to the house of his God, by the care he had taken to provide a place for the reception of the tabernacle, not unworthy of the supreme Majesty of him whom it represented—all this is no slight proof how much the glory of the Lord was endeared to his heart. But however true this testimony might be in the mouth of the king of Israel, he was in this, as in all the other circumstances of his life, whether of a glorious or a humiliating nature, merely the echo and interpreter of the true David by excellence, the true King of Israel: and, when explained to the very letter, the whole of this psalm is applicable to Jesus Christ. He was to wash not his hands and his body merely, but all mankind in his purifying blood. By this baptism, after which he sighed with so much ardour, all the saints of every age are associated to himself, since it is by virtue of his blood that they are sanctified. *I will wash my hands among the innocent:* for hands like theirs alone can possess that purity which renders man worthy to administer the mysteries of God, and to communicate to his fellow-man, the right of administering them after the example, and in the name of their divine master. *And I will compass thine altar, O Lord:* for whatever the rank of the minister that enters the sanctuary, whatever his sanctity and recollection, or whatever his unworthiness and dissipation, it is still Jesus Christ who is really present, and who compasses the altar of

the Lord. He encompasses it as mediator between God and man; he descends thereon to perpetuate that sacrifice which he commenced upon the cross. He descends thereon, *that he may hear the voice of praise*; that he may receive the homages addressed to the supreme Majesty, and transmit them even to the throne of his Father, by imparting to them all their merit and efficacy. He descends also to inspire us with sentiments of thanksgiving, and to form within us a spirit of prayer, by tracing out in his own person the greatness, the wonders, and the mercies of our God: *That he may publish all thy marvellous works.*

He encompasses the altar like a sincere worshipper, who prefers the beauty of the house of his God before all the tabernacles of sinners, and the place where his glory dwells, before all the brilliant festivities of the wicked. Prefer, do I say? He is himself the principal ornament of this house; and, that it may lose nothing of its grandeur, himself, the splendour of the Father, the faithful image of his majesty and wisdom, condescends for ever to encompass this altar, in order to teach us: *That he loves the beauty of thy house, O God, and the place of the habitation of thy glory.*

He encompasses the altar as a victim: he there fills the place of sinful man, but of man grieved at his sins—of man resolved to make satisfaction for his sins: he knows that iniquity is always abominable in the eyes of a God of infinite sanctity; but he also knows that this God is just and merciful,

that in the counsels of his justice he distinguishes between the sinner who returns to him in the sincerity of his heart, and the sinner who, by his stubbornness and indocility, offers an insult to his mercy. He separates him who was once guilty, but is now sensible of his disorders and bewails them with humility of heart, from the man whose hands are still tainted with the blood of his iniquities: Therefore, in the name of the former, he demands that mercy, of which the latter, by their impenitence, have rendered themselves unworthy: *Destroy not my soul with the impious, and my life with men of bloody minds.*

He encompasses the altar as a High-priest, but as a High-priest holy, excellent, and without blemish; who has no need, says the apostle, of atoning for his own sins, before offering for those of the people, since he enters the sanctuary with that innocence and purity which are essential to his nature: *But I have walked in my innocency.* Still, however, he demands mercy for himself, since he graciously condescends to rank himself in the number of those sinners, of whom he is the representative, and with whose debts he is charged, in order to acquit them by the effusion of his blood; and this blood it is that shall cry aloud in our name, with a voice so powerful and efficacious: *Redeem me, O Lord, and have mercy on me!*

In fine, he encompasses the altar as our Brother: and it is to exert this endearing quality in our regard, that his feet have stood in the right way; that

he has preceded us in the paths of justice, in order to set us an example of the most prompt obedience, and the most inviolable fidelity. Before the mysteries of his incarnation and of our redemption had been operated, he had loved his Father, and been beloved by him, from all eternity; but now, that we love him, and are ourselves become the objects of his affection, he desires, even to the consummation of ages, to speak in the midst of us the language of gratitude and love: *In the assembly I will bless thee, O Lord!*

Thus we see that the various functions which Jesus Christ is about to fulfil at the altar, are clearly expressed in this psalm; but do we as clearly see, and practically feel, the dispositions with which the priest and the congregation should approach thereto? Does the former fill a character devoid of spirit, and unconnected with the general interests? Do the latter remain unconcerned spectators of so solemn and affecting a mystery? Do they leave Jesus Christ to plead in their name, without uniting their desires and their supplications with his, their individual sacrifices to the universal oblation he is about to make of himself to his eternal Father?

Ah, my brethren, let us all, of whatever rank or condition, whether priests or laics, just men or sinners, rich or poor, let us all repeat: *I will wash my hands among the innocent.* Jesus Christ is the principle of all justice, let us, therefore, hasten to draw that purifying water from the fountains of

the Saviour, which alone is effectual to wash away those stains we unavoidably contract in our commerce with the wicked. *I will compass thy altar, O my God!*—I will fly to it as a sure asylum against the violence of my enemies; I will fly to it to breathe that odour of life which is an antidote against the poisonous vapours exhaled from the corruption of the world; I will hold fast by this altar, whence I derive all my strength under temptation, all my peace of mind under distracting cares, all my consolation under afflictions, all my fortitude in the hour of trial.

How different the words I hear in thy temple, from those that are constantly heard in the world! There I hear men blaspheming mysteries, which they do not understand, murmuring against a Providence, into whose counsels they have never penetrated, and affecting to despise those virtues which they have not the resolution to practise. In the former place, I hear nothing but the language of benediction and of gratitude, nothing but *the voice of praise*; in the latter I am sometimes seduced into culpable compliances, and betrayed into a language which savours too much of the world. Associated with the wicked in their crimes, have I not offered many an insult to my God, by contemning his loving-kindness, calumniating his justice, and betraying his truth? Here, on the contrary, I learn to honour God by my words; to bless the wisdom of his works by the most profound submission to all his appointments, and to



glorify his boundless mercies, by sentiments of the most lively gratitude—*By publishing all his marvellous works.*

I also shall imbibe a taste for *the beauty of the house of my God*: and although it may not display that agreeable variety, and those brilliant ornaments, which dazzle the eye in the mansions of sinners; yet it will strike me with a spectacle still more affecting, a spectacle which the world can never afford—that of the pure in heart, who come hither to be still more perfectly purified; of the humble in heart, who come hither to humble themselves still more profoundly in presence of the supreme Majesty: such are the attractions that I find in this holy place, which endear it to my heart, and make me sigh for some portion of that glory which the Almighty has here in reserve for his elect.

O my God, how sweet the peace and security which I find within the precincts of thy tabernacle! Undistinguished in every other place from those who offend thee, and guilty myself of innumerable transgressions, who shall shield me from thy just indignation? But here my cause becomes that of thy son: if united to him by the bonds of charity, thou canst not reject me without rejecting him; thou canst not condemn me, because he is the author of my salvation; thou canst not *destroy my soul with the impious, and my life with men of bloody minds*, because he has filled me with the vivifying influence of his holy Spirit.

Sinners carry in their own hands the testimony

of their iniquities; all their works are marked by the character of the passions under whose influence they were performed: accustomed to oppress the innocent, to sacrifice the interests of the widow, to barter the rights of the orphan, *their right hand is filled with the fruits of their iniquities.* But far other interests lead me, O Lord, to the foot of thy altar; I come hither to fill my hands with the precious gifts that are here offered to thy divine Majesty. The blood which is about to purple these hands, shall not cry aloud for vengeance against us, who approach with holy dispositions to thy sanctuary; *and if our right hand be filled with gifts,* they are those which thy bounty lavishes upon us with such profusion and indulgence.

Ah sinner that I am, still I can here claim some portion of innocence and sanctity as my own: *I have walked in my innocency.* When contrasted with thine infinite mercies, and with the merits of thy Son, my iniquities sink into insignificance; I am sanctified by his sanctity, and justified by his righteousness, and therefore through him I have a right to solicit a reward: but, in proportion as my sins are atoned for by the merit of his sacrifice, the more sensible ought I to be of their grievousness, and to exclaim with a livelier sorrow, and more eager importunity; *Redeem me, O Lord, and have mercy on me.*

Thy sanctuary is the gate that conducts me into the paths of justice; thy altar is the fount whence flows that sanctifying stream, which has purified

me from all my stains: thy sacrifice has effaced the hand-writing of death and condemnation that stood against me: My feet have been wearied in the paths of iniquity, I am desirous henceforward to walk in the way of thy commandments. Do thou cause *my feet to stand in the right path*, by repressing the natural levity and inconstancy of my heart.

In the interior of our homes, let us inculcate the important truth, that God is to be worshipped in every place; in the societies we frequent, let us exhibit a faithful model of that gentleness, that humility, and that charity, which are so strongly recommended in the gospel; in the temple of God let us behave with that profound recollection, that religious attention, and that unwearied assiduity, which may serve as a pattern to the rest of the faithful, to remind them of the dispositions in which they should approach the sanctuary: this will be truly *to bless the Lord in the assembly of the faithful*. But there is another assembly still more worthy of my desires, and still more capable of satisfying them:—that is, the assemblage of thy saints and elect. May a perseverance in holiness conduct me from these temporal benedictions, to join in that canticle which nothing shall interrupt, and which they shall sing throughout eternity!

With this ceremony of the washing of hands terminates the preparatory part of the Mass: the church is now about to commence the sacrifice. Let us enter into the dispositions necessary to ren-

der us worthy of assisting at these adorable mysteries. Let us renew those sentiments of humility which, contrasting our unworthiness with the infinite sanctity of this victim, cannot be too profound, accompanied with those sentiments of salutary dread, which, at the view of the astonishing disproportion between his omnipotence and our nothingness, cannot be too feelingly alive. On withdrawing from the altar, let us be solicitous to mingle with the penitents without, in order that the Almighty may not hereafter confound us with the impious.

Do thou form in us, O God, a homage worthy of thyself—a sincere homage, founded upon the solid basis of piety and humility, supported by fervour, and animated by charity. Grant that as often as we approach thy altar, it may be with mingled sensations of confidence and holy fear! Make us truly sensible of thy greatness and our misery; of thy power and our weakness; of thy justice and our transgressions. Dispositions like these will lead us to thy perfect knowledge here; and conduct us to the eternal enjoyment of thyself hereafter. Amen.

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#### ON THE ORATE FRATRES.

“Pray one for another, that you may be saved.” JAMES, v. 16.

**I**T is evident that prayer is the duty of every Christian, and the very essence of a spiritual life; that if the grace of God animates and supports us in a course of holiness, it is but the effect of prayer, bestowed

by the Almighty according to the usual order of his providence and mercy. To this acknowledged truth we may add another not less incontestible. A Christian ought not to confine his prayers to his own personal necessities; the church, who prays for all, wishes all her children to unite in one common prayer for their common necessities: to this she exhorts them in the words of my text: *Pray one for another*. She considers salvation as the reward not only of him who is the object of prayer, but also of him who prays, and of that charity which teaches us to sympathize in the miseries of our brethren as though they were our own.

From these truths we may draw an important consequence: that this exhortation from the mouth of the Priest; *Pray Brethren, &c.* necessarily implies the obligation of praying for each other. Favour me, my brethren, with your pious attention to these and the ensuing words, while we enter upon a consideration of the duties which they enforce.

But this invitation must surely have some other object than the general necessity of prayer, otherwise the minister would not have waited till this part of the Mass, before inviting the people to pray. In our explanation of various forms of prayer, we have already seen the part which the people should bear therein. It is for them, with them, and in their name, that the priest has made the confession of sins, the profession of faith, &c. and performed all the other ceremonies that have engaged our at-

tention. Whence, therefore, the necessity of merely recommending us to pray, when he beholds us still meditating on the various prayers we have just recited with him? The reason assigned by all Ecclesiastical writers, is that the action of the sacrifice is on the point of commencing. There is no longer any question respecting preliminaries or preparations: the sacrifice is about to be consummated. Undistinguished, till this moment, from the people, the priest has, in some measure, conversed with them, by the various good wishes he has tendered, by the different instructions he has offered, and even by the prayers which he has presented in their name. But now, for the last time till the close of the sacrifice, the minister, after kissing the altar, turns and salutes the people: he is about to quit them, and retire into the most secret recesses of the sanctuary: like Moses, he is about to ascend the mountain to converse alone with his God; but, conscious that he bears all the weaknesses which are inseparable from humanity, and feeling that he has need, at this awful moment, of being succoured by the prayers of the people, he exclaims, before ascending the hallowed mount; *My brethren, pray for me*: for such was the personal application—*for me*—that the priest made of this prayer eight hundred years ago, as it is at present the practice with the Carthusians, who, adhering to the ancient custom, repeat; *for me, a poor sinner*. After this prayer, the priest turns towards the altar: he has no further communication

with the assistants till after the consummation of the sacrifice; and if, from time to time, he raises his voice to be heard by the congregation, it is without turning to them, and without any of the customary salutations, because the ministry, to which he is at this moment associated, raises him, in some degree, above the level of humanity, and entirely separates him from the things of earth. And would to God that he were truly separated from them by the dispositions of his heart, by a profound recollection of mind, by a perfect freedom from all those distractions that are sure to assail him at this most interesting, this most awful moment!

But to be convinced of the interest which the people ought to take in this ceremony, let us consider the words of this invitation, and the answer returned by the people. *Pray, my brethren*, exclaims the priest, *that my sacrifice and yours may prove acceptable to God, the father Almighty:—May the Lord*, replies the congregation, *may the Lord receive the sacrifice from thy hands, to the praise and glory of his name, to our benefit, and that of his holy church.*

*Pray*—that is, let us not fail to unite, at a moment when our common cause and our mutual interests are so nearly concerned: the distance between us, which arises from the privilege conferred on me of being admitted into the Holy of Holies, will not make me lose sight of your welfare; therefore, be you not unmindful of the claims which I have upon your charity. You are my *brethren* in Jesus Christ; although the ministry with which I

am invested, raises me above you, it diminishes nothing of that perfect conformity which renders us all children of the same family : we are all about to sit at the same table, to break the same bread which is to impart the same life to us all : the same blood shall flow into all our veins, and become the germ of the same glorious inheritance. Therefore the sacrifice I am about to offer of Jesus Christ, the first-born of this family, *is my sacrifice and yours* : it is my sacrifice, since, all unworthy that I am, I have been established in the ministry thereof ; it is also yours, in a sense, less extensive it is true, but not less real. I am about to offer it, through Jesus Christ, while you are about to offer it with him, and by my hands. Of what importance then must it be to all of us, *that this sacrifice should prove acceptable to God the Father*. But is it possible that the blood of a God—of the only Son of a God, can be rejected ? Can any blemish be found in the victim, to render it unworthy of the majesty of him to whom it is offered ? By no means : but this God, who is as great, powerful, and just, as he is pure and holy, may see such injustices in our hands, such criminal desires in our hearts, and such stains on our conscience, as render us unworthy to participate in the fruit of this sacrifice : and it is with a view to engage you to enter into fresh sentiments of grief and sorrow for our mutual offences, that I renew my solicitations to you to pray.

To an invitation so justly made, and so benefi-



cial in its consequences, what reply should be made by the people? Yes, we pray, we demand with all the ardour of our hearts, that *thy God and ours may receive this sacrifice from thy hands*; that he may perfectly sanctify these hands already consecrated by the unction of the priesthood: these hands that have so often sustained the ark of the covenant; these hands so often employed in diffusing benedictions around; we beseech the Almighty, that they may be effectually raised towards heaven, as well for us as for yourselves: may these hands, like those of the legislator of Israel, possess the virtue to appease the anger of the Lord, to ensure victory to his people, and to scatter the enemies of his holy name. We will never forget that the primary object of the sacrifice is to make due reparation to the Almighty for the glory of which we have defrauded him by our sins: in union, therefore, with this victim that thou art about to offer, we will render our homage to the Lord, by submission to his decrees, by confidence in his goodness, by a dread of his justice, by gratitude for his mercies, and by a solicitude to avoid every thing displeasing in his sight: this will truly be an oblation *to the praise and glory of his holy name*. And, joining our mutual interests with the mutual homages which we render to our Maker, we will pray that this sacrifice *may be conducive to our benefit*—that its efficacy may extend to all our necessities, that it may purify our souls, that it may shed the light of wisdom upon our minds, that it may inflame our

hearts, and be a guide to our steps ; that it may give consolation to our hopes, and prove beneficial even in a temporal point of view, by affording security to our lives, our families, and our possessions. Engaged in these our lawful interests, let us not, however, lose sight of the general interests *of his holy church*. It is to God, our common Father, that the sacrifice is about to be presented ; it is Jesus Christ, our brother, who is to be the offerer ; it is by the hands of a minister chosen from among us that it is to be offered ; it was for the sanctification of all mankind that the tremendous mystery, which will this day be renewed, was originally consummated. If, therefore, our prayers be of a selfish nature ; if we presume to qualify them with restrictions and reserves, what else can we expect, than to find them rejected ?

These reflections, my brethren, will be sufficient to show, that this invitation of the priest, and the answer that accompanies it, contain an inexhaustible fund of instructions ; that they forcibly condemn the indifference of those Christians, who assist at the sacrifice of the Mass, as at an action in which they have no interest ; who approach the altar with a heart filled with indifference, and a mind with distraction ; who, far from applying the prayers, which the church has consecrated to this most solemn rite, as helps to the renewal of fervour, gaze around with idle and thoughtless curiosity. Can they pretend to call this *their sacrifice* ? What share have they in its benefits ? What honour do

they render to the God to whom it is offered? Can we suppose them alive to the necessities of others, when we see them so insensible to the maladies of their own souls? In vain the minister exhorts them to pray—little accustomed to this holy exercise in the interior of their homes, they bring to the temple the same spirit of levity and dissipation, that everywhere accompanies them. Ah, let us, when we assist at the holy sacrifice, tremble at the idea of being ranked in this miserable number! Let us apply to ourselves the admonition given by the priest; and, in order to profit thereby, consider the threefold disposition which it enjoins—dispositions that must necessarily accompany all the other prayers of the Liturgy, if we wish to profit by the many advantages they hold forth.

In the first place, this admonition recalls us to recollection of mind. It is at the moment that the minister withdraws from the people, and retires to recollect himself in the silence of the sanctuary, from which he returns no more till the conclusion of the sacrifice;—it is at this important moment that he addresses his brethren, and invites them to pray. Now, therefore, it more particularly behoves us to withdraw into the sanctuary of our hearts, to reflect more seriously on our necessities, to meditate more profoundly on the designs of Jesus Christ in our regard, to examine more scrupulously those faults that may detract from the efficacy of the sacrifice, and more carefully to avoid those distractions which

oftimes, by our own negligence, take from prayer all its value and its effect.

Secondly, This admonition of the priest, recalls us to the exercise of mutual charity. By the title of brethren, which is there conferred, an obligation is imposed of guarding our hearts against all prejudice, partiality, enmity, resentment, and bitterness; every affliction, every necessity of our neighbour, ought to engage our attention, our compassion, and our prayers. We are the brethren, not merely of our friends and neighbours, but also of those with whom we are the least connected by the natural ties of kindred and country, and of those who, either through malice or contempt, have in any way injured our reputation or our fortune. They are all present in the mind of Jesus Christ at the moment he offers his sacrifice; they ought also to be present to our hearts, when we promise his minister to be earnest and solicitous about our personal necessities.

Thirdly, This admonition reminds us of the love which we owe to our mother the church: indeed, this love is a natural effect of the quality of children with which we are invested, and of the title of brethren by which the priest salutes us. It is in the name, and as a minister of this church that he acts and speaks; and the sacrifice he is about to offer cannot but interest this holy church, since, in its consummation on the cross, she was adopted as the spouse of Jesus Christ, to present him, in her numerous offspring, with the pledges of his love.

She is also our church, since she unites us in a profession of the same faith, in a community of the same prayers, in a participation of the same sacraments, and in a docility to the same invisible head, and his co-operators in the ministry. Her welfare should be as dear to our heart as our own personal interests; we should sympathize in her sorrows, as if they were our own; and the same ardour which faith inspires in the prayers we offer for ourselves, should animate our breasts, when we reflect on the schisms that distract, and the innovations of false brethren, that afflict her; on the heresies that eclipse her splendour, on the conflicts that trouble her repose, and the disorders by which bad Christians dishonour her name.

Let all these motives be henceforward the means of adding actively to our faith, and fervour to our devotion: may our petitions, united to those of Jesus Christ in his sacrifice, draw down upon us the favourable regard of his mercy in time, and be a happy presage of the same mercies throughout eternity. Amen.

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#### ON THE PREFACE.

Thy ear hath heard the preparation of the heart.—Ps. x. 17.

**T**HE truth here announced by the Royal Prophet is established in more than one place of the Sacred Scriptures. God listens to the simple preparation of the heart; for, in order to obtain the graces ne-

cessary for our salvation, the Almighty requires neither a long detail of our ills, nor a melancholy enumeration of our miseries. Impressed with a conviction of this truth, the wise man declares that successful prayer consists not of many words ; and Jesus Christ himself has taught us, that when we wish to pray, brevity of expression is not less essential than profound recollection of mind. Not unmindful of this, the church is careful when she instructs us how to pray, to comprize in short and emphatic expressions the most important of her demands : persuaded also of that other truth, that God listens to the simple preparation of the heart, she never engages in this holy exercise, without a suitable preparation. This is particularly observable in the Preface, which is not properly a prayer, but a fresh invitation to pray, containing the most powerful motives to this holy practice. It is placed immediately before the prayers of the Canon, in order that this most interesting part of the Mass may inspire us with holy and suitable dispositions. Let the reflections I am about to offer upon this invitation to prayer, induce you to enter fully and sincerely into this necessary frame of mind.

The word *Preface* is itself expressive of the nature of this prayer, which is preparatory to the Canon, and immediately precedes the prayers that compose it. In our last instruction, we beheld the priest quitting the people, and bidding them, as it were, a solemn adieu, by recommending himself to their prayers ; we observed, that he entered the

holy of holies, not to return thence till the mystery of our redemption should be consummated. This mystical application will appear still more just, when we consider, that it was formerly the custom to close the gates of the sanctuary before the Preface, and not to open them again till the time of the communion. Some remains of this custom may still be traced in certain churches, where a curtain is drawn between the sanctuary and the body of the church, doubtless to announce that total absence and separation of the priest from the rest of the faithful, which is requisite whilst he is wrapt in this holy communion with his God, and honoured with the most intimate communications of his Maker.

Still, however, he continues, from the hallowed recesses of the sanctuary, to address his people in the most pathetic exhortations. Is not this practice analagous to another mystery, infinitely more consoling to us,—the mystery by which Jesus Christ is at the same moment present both in earth and in heaven? On earth, to animate and instruct; in heaven, to protect and defend us. Since the priest, in these awful functions, is the sensible image of an invisible God, let us receive him with the respect due to such a minister; and as God listens favourably to him when he undertakes our cause, let us attend to him with docility when he solicits our prayers.

The preface immediately follows the prayers called *The Secreta*, from being pronounced in a low tone of voice. We have not dwelt on these

prayers, because they vary according to each different solemnity. With them terminates the third part of the Mass, which may be termed the Offertory. To give the people notice that this prayer is finished, the priest raises his voice, and repeats aloud ; *World without end* : and the *amen* repeated by the people is at once an assent to all that is contained in the prayers of the Secreta, and an anticipated acquiescence in all those that are about to be offered in the sequel, or fourth part of the Mass, which is called the Consecration. The priest, therefore, employs the same benediction which he has already more than once bestowed on the congregation ; but being no longer considered as in the midst of them, he does not turn towards them, but, in a voice sufficiently audible to the greater part, exclaims ; *The Lord be with you !*

*Lift up your hearts*, says the priest : *We have them lifted up to the Lord* ; replies the whole congregation. These words, so worthy in themselves of all our attention, and so proper, if repeated with a lively faith, to excite the most fervent devotion, will appear still more venerable when we learn, that they may be traced back to the apostolical age ; and that it is impossible to assign them any other origin, than that period when the use of *prefaces* to the various festivals was introduced into the church : these words always preceded the Canon, and in some degree formed a part of it. St Cyprian, whose words on this subject I cannot refrain from citing, thus addressed his people : ‘ My



brethren, when we assist at the *prayer*,—for such was the name then given to the Mass,—‘ we ought to devote all our heart and mind to so sacred an object ; let us, at this important moment, banish all thoughts of the world, and of temporal concerns, and apply our whole minds to the subject of our demand. It is with this intent that, before commencing *the prayer*, the priest prepares his brethren by this preface ; *Raise up your hearts* ; in order that the people may be admonished by the answer itself—*We have them lifted up to the Lord*—of the obligation incumbent on them, of fixing their whole attention upon God alone. Let us, therefore, close our hearts against the intrusion of every other object ; let us not, at the moment we are soliciting his graces, permit his enemy even to approach us.’ What an impression ought the words of this Father to make on our minds, when we reflect that he wrote in the first ages of the church ! Had he lived in our days, and witnessed that air of dissipation, and even of irreligion, which Christians bring to the foot of the altar ; had he perceived, as we, alas ! but too frequently do, that these words seem in our mouths no longer to possess the signification attached to them in the best days of Christianity ; that, while repeating, through mere habit : *We have our hearts raised up to the Lord* ; we are at the same moment miserably grovelling upon the earth, lost and buried in its pleasures and dissipations : had he witnessed all this, I say, would he not have added the most alarming menaces to this insulted invitation ?

Ah ! if you be sincere, replies the minister ; if your hearts be truly raised up to heaven, join with me in *giving thanks to the Lord our God*. We are taught by these words of the church, that thanksgiving should always accompany prayer ; that, of all dispositions, this is the most capable of rendering it efficacious ; that a grateful heart acquires a certain degree of ascendancy,—if I may be allowed the expression,—over that of a God who is infinitely just, and filled with compassion for our miseries. Let us, therefore, exclaim, with all the fervour of a heart that is feelingly alive to the mercies of its God : *It is meet and just to give thanks to the Lord !*

Authorized by the ministry with which the church has invested him, and supported by the unanimous concurrence of his people, the priest repeats these same words to show, that the whole assembled multitude have but one heart and one soul, when united in the solemn duty of rendering to God their mutual tribute of gratitude and love. To motives of justice he also adds those of interest ;—*It is right and available to salvation*. He declares, that this homage is equally unconfined in its extent and its duration ; *We should always, and in all places, give thanks to thee, O holy Lord, Father Almighty, eternal God !* The remainder of this prayer breathes the very spirit by which it was inspired, and if meditated on with due attention, would be sufficient to convince us, that these acts of thanksgiving are rendered to a God, who consequently stands in no

need of our homages ; to a *Father* who graciously condescends to accept them in his tender mercies ; to a Being who is *Almighty*, and all-sufficient for himself, but who is, nevertheless, desirous that we should commence those acts of praise in time, which are to be our employment throughout eternity. There is also another point of view in which this prayer is entitled to our consideration :—for we must never forget, that its principal object is to unite the church militant on earth with the church triumphant in heaven. It is *through Jesus Christ* that these acts of thanksgiving are offered, since he holds—if I may so express it—the middle space between the terrestrial Jerusalem and the city of the living God ; he is God by nature, and man by obedience ;—at once *our Lord* and the Sovereign Ruler of Heaven. It is he who has given utterance to our tongues, that we may praise his eternal Father ; it is through him that all the heavenly host render their homage to the Divine Majesty, according to the varied rank which it has pleased him to assign them. Behold here a miracle of mercy ! Each of these blessed spirits is confined to his particular function, while we, all unworthy as we are even to raise our eyes towards Heaven, are honoured with all these functions united. *The angels praise him*—and our temples resound with the daily canticles that are chaunted to his honour : *The dominations adore him*—and, associated with them, we also approach his altars, to fall prostrate in humble adoration before him ; before him *The*

*powers of heaven tremble*—and we are invited to soften the rigour of his justice, by approaching him in dispositions of holy fear, attempered with fervent love. *To thee the heavenly virtues, the cherubim and seraphim, cry aloud, with incessant jubilation*—and we are about to be admitted into the company of these blessed spirits, to unite in the canticle of praise which they repeat without ceasing. Like them, may our lives be one uninterrupted act of praise; may we never contradict, by our actions, the solemn avowal we here make of the sanctity of our God!

Roused to a holy fervour by so animating a subject, we should not hesitate to enter immediately upon the consideration of this canticle, were we not obliged to set bounds to our zeal. To a point of such interest, we shall devote the next entire Instruction; meanwhile, it may be proper to observe, that, on particular solemnities, the church has added such words to this Preface, as are expressive of the particular object of the mystery she celebrates; that many of these Prefaces may be traced back to the earliest ages; that there is not one which, if meditated on with attention, would not greatly contribute to enliven our faith, and animate our devotion. Chaunted with the church through mere habit, perhaps many of these prayers may have lost their energy and effect; let us, therefore, by our future assiduity, be careful to repeat them with the attention and reverence they so justly demand. My brethren, as we are permitted to

join our voices with those of the blessed spirits, in rendering a tribute of grateful homage to our common Lord, we ought to resemble them as nearly as possible in the fervour of their charity, and to copy their obedience and fidelity, that we may be found worthy of being associated with them in their canticles of everlasting praise. Amen.

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#### ON THE SANCTUS.

“And the seraphim cried one to another, and said; Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts! all the earth is full of thy glory.”—Isaias, chap. vi. 3.

THE prayer, or, more properly speaking, the canticle, called the *Sanctus*, follows immediately after the Preface chaunted by the priest. It may also be termed the Preface of the people: for, though they have hitherto participated only in spirit and desire, in the acts of praise and thanksgiving rendered to the Almighty; yet now, the vivacity of their love, and the ardour of their gratitude, will no longer allow them to be silent. They yield to the impulse of their feelings, and interrupt the priest;—for it may easily be seen that the sense of the words is not completed at the moment when all the people exclaim; *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth!* The minister, in his turn, becomes silent, and repeats, in a low voice, the canticle which the people chaunt in loud transports of joy.

I say transports of joy—for I speak of such Christians only as are worthy of that sacred name ;—of such as are animated with a true spirit of devotion and charity, and accustomed to meditate attentively on what the church ordains for their instruction. To such I this day address myself, with the hope to convince them, that there is no canticle better calculated to excite their confidence and love: let me, therefore, solicit your usual attention, while I endeavour to point out the object and spirit of this interesting subject.

This prayer occurs in all the ancient Liturgies, which is a proof of its being one of those that have always appeared most proper to animate the faith and nourish the piety of the Christian. The church proposed it as a motive of emulation to the catechumens; and in the exhortations which St Gregory of Nice addressed to them, he has these words; ‘ Hasten to the baptismal fount, that you may enjoy the consoling privilege of uniting with the faithful in the canticle of the seraphim.’ Another Father expresses his astonishment, that lips, which have once been hallowed by these sacred words, should ever after dare to utter any thing dishonourable to the name of Christian. In one of the councils it is ordained, that this canticle should be recited at all Masses, as well public as private, and a censure is passed on a practice which had crept into the church, of reserving it for solemn Masses alone. This council does not except even days of penitence, or such as are consecrated to the memory

of the dead ; because, say the Fathers of this assembly, this canticle can never produce weariness in the mind of the faithful believer, even though he should spend whole days and nights in reciting it.

The church has taken this whole canticle from the scripture, without any alteration or addition. It occurs in the Apocalypse of the apostle St John. Of all the visions which the Almighty revealed to this his favoured servant, the most striking was the view he was pleased to give him of the mysteries of his kingdom. In order, therefore, to repeat it with effect, we must transport ourselves in spirit to the place where it is worthily and triumphantly sung. It is the canticle of the blessed, and of the angelic choirs ; how cheering, therefore, the reflection, that we should be admitted to the happiness of uniting with them in repeating it ! If our hearts be not pure as those of the saints and angels, our will at least may be as upright as theirs : come then, let us share in their joyful transports ; let us mingle our homages with theirs, and thirst after justice, with the same ardour with which they pant for its possession :—such is the three-fold disposition which this prayer inspires.

The joy of this canticle makes a heaven even of earth itself. This shout of exultation, which resounds through the abodes of eternity, is echoed back even to the place of our sorrowful exile. There, as around the throne of the Eternal, is heard the triumphant song of *Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth!* Our feeble voices arise in unison

with those of the friends of God, and are heard with the same benign complacency. Let hope, therefore, enliven our hearts ; for if, as yet, we are pilgrims wandering at a distance from our native land, we are still blessed with a foretaste of its delights ; if the palm of victory be not already in our grasp, we see it in the hands of a God, who has acquired it for us at an infinite price, and who destines it as the reward of our fidelity. Privileged even beyond the chosen people of old, who were forbidden to pronounce the name of Jehovah, we are encouraged to raise our voices with confidence, and magnify the Lord of hosts. Enrolled in the number of his friends and people, he delights to hear us recount his mercies, and publish the wonders of his might. He is *thrice holy*, and we are a thousand times guilty : yet is he full of mercy, and disdains not the homage that flows from an humble and grateful heart.

What raptures, my brethren, would this canticle excite, if, at the moment of repeating it, we were transported in spirit to the abodes of the blessed ! Were we feelingly persuaded, that like the angels, we also encompass the throne of the Lord of hosts ; were our eyes fixed, not upon that material altar on which the victim is immolated in a visible manner, but on that invisible altar which stands sublime in the sanctuary of heaven, on which the Lamb of God, that was slain from the foundation of the world, continually offers himself as a sacrifice of propitiation to his eternal Father ; were our



faith sufficiently enlightened, to make us behold all the objects of this canticle in their genuine colours, we should never be weary of repeating it, and, penetrated with a holy awe, we should zealously strive to acquit ourselves of that debt of gratitude and homage, which the Creator has a right to exact from all his creatures.

Yes, this disposition of holy awe is necessary in order to recite the prayer with effect. As the cherubim and seraphim, when chaunting this canticle, veil their countenances with their wings, so the priest, in repeating it, joins his hands upon his breast, and bends in profound adoration. The Christian who unites with him in this act of praise, should also abase himself in presence of the Supreme Majesty, and recollect that he is a slave who addresses his Lord, a creature who praises the author of his being, and above all a sinner who presumes to mingle in the number of the pure spirits, to render homage to the author of all sanctity. In repeating these words, we ought not to pass unnoticed the respective qualities under which the Almighty is pleased to cause himself to be addressed. He is called the Lord of Hosts, the King of Glory ; it is consequently to him alone that glory, dominion, and power, are to be ascribed : he alone is all-holy, all-perfect, and all-sufficient for himself, while we can claim nothing but shame and confusion of face. We must, therefore, learn to sing this canticle with a respect mingled with fear and trembling : indeed it is this that constitutes the essential difference be-

tween our dispositions and those of the saints and angels. Secure of their happiness, incapable of forfeiting their justice, and everlastingly insured against the loss of charity, they experience no reserve in their high and holy transports—the very awe with which their souls are filled, is the dictate of love rather than of fear. Such is the situation befitting the Elect of God : but as for us, whose virtue is always insecure, whose perseverance is ever doubtful, whose victories are indecisive, and whose salvation is uncertain, our canticles are rather expressions of grief and lamentation than of joy and gladness; and however well-grounded our confidence may generally be, it must sometimes yield to those terrors that are justly excited by our weakness and inconstancy. To enliven this confidence, let us excite ourselves to the love of justice—the third disposition that this prayer is designed to inspire. It is to a *thrice holy God* that our homages are addressed, and Jesus Christ, by whom they are presented, cries aloud from the recesses of the sanctuary : ‘ Be ye holy, even as your Father, who is in heaven, is holy ; be ye perfect, according to the measure of the gifts which ye have received, as He, according to his very essence, is perfect.’ Let every polluted tongue, therefore, be hushed in his presence ; let every corrupted heart tremble at the idea of prophaning a name which breathes nothing but sanctity. This cannot, then, be the canticle of the sinner ; and should the church permit him to mingle in the number of the just, it is under the

impression that his heart is deeply penetrated with sentiments of contrition and sorrow. But as for you, ye faithful souls, to whom God has granted the grace of fearing and detesting sin, let every word of this canticle recal to your minds the obligations which this sanctity imposes. The Father who has adopted you is holy ;—let your docility be a proof how deeply you feel the immense benefit of this your vocation. The Son by whom you have been redeemed, and who is now about to be immolated for you, is holy ;—let your love and gratitude testify how strongly you are convinced of the value of these gifts. The God whom you praise is the Lord of Hosts : he is desirous that, under his standard, you should ever stand prepared to combat against flesh and blood ; that to resist their assaults you should employ those weapons of faith which he has placed in your hands. *Heaven and earth are full of his glory*—hence it is that he permits us to raise our desires even to the place where he has established the throne of his glory. In mind and heart you should already be present before this throne ; you should incessantly sigh after your true country ; by dispositions like these you would, to the utmost of your power, contribute to the glory by which he is encompassed in heaven. But while on earth, it is his will that you should glorify him by the zeal of your homage, by your edifying conversation, and by the grateful odour of your example. Let every Christian strive to oppose all the insidious attempts that are made to detract from

the glory of his God ; so that it may be justly said, that the earth, which is his footstool, is not less encompassed by his glory, than the throne on which he is seated in the skies. He will be glorified in heaven, in proportion as you honour him here upon earth, by the sanctity of your actions ; for every good deed, which virtue and charity inspire, must ultimately be referred to him ; every hosannah that is sung after the victories we obtain, must redound to his praise. Above all, we must honour him upon earth in the person of Jesus Christ, his only son, *by blessing him who cometh in the name of the Lord*. But remember that the homage and blessing of which he is jealous, consist in a faithful imitation of his holy example, joined with a perfect conformity to his adorable will. In vain shall we repeat this canticle, which resounded through the streets of Jerusalem on the day of the triumphant entrance of the Saviour, if, like the Jews, we be ready to crucify him in our hearts. Let his name be always blessed :—blessed by patience under afflictions, by vigilance under temptations, and by gratitude in the hour of triumph ; blessed by our perfect detachment from the perishable possessions of this life, and by the application of our riches to the relief of our necessitous brethren ; blessed in our bodies by mortification, in our minds by humility, and in our hearts by charity. Let us bless him by bearing his cross, by putting on his spirit, and practising his self-denial. Let us bless him with fidelity in time, that amidst the full as-

semblage of his saints and angels, we may sing throughout eternity ; *Hosannah in the highest!*—Amen.

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#### ON THE BEST METHOD OF UNITING WITH THE PRIEST.

My heart grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall flame out.—Ps. xxxviii. v. 4.

**N**OTHING can be more appropriate than these expressions of the psalmist, in the mouth of that Christian who, attentive to the objects of his religion, passes successively from prayer to meditation, from singing the divine canticles to that silence which contemplation inspires. Such are the feelings he will experience at the moment of the sacrifice, if he is careful faithfully to follow Jesus Christ and his minister ; the former in the homage which he renders to his Eternal Father ; the latter in the prayers he recites, the ceremonies he observes, and the different instructions he offers. With him he will humble himself to receive instruction, with him he will publish the greatness and the mercies of the Lord ; and when the moment of silence is arrived, he will imitate the priest, and allow only his heart to speak, which, in the presence of its Maker, should never imitate the silence of the lips. These reflections naturally lead us to examine what method, of all others, is most proper to ensure us the full advantage of the prayers that compose the

liturgy. As it is not my intention to renew those disputes which, far from affording instruction and edification, tend rather to perplex the conscience, I shall refrain from answering those objections which prejudice might raise on so important a subject. I shall content myself with taking a simple review of the methods more generally sanctioned by the church, and with examining which of these methods appears most conducive to animate the piety of the faithful, and to fulfil the great object of the sacrifice. In considering these truths, I require the same simplicity and the same impartiality, on your part, my brethren, with which I myself propose to treat the subject: and I humbly beseech the Almighty, that the reflections I am about to offer, may flow from the suggestions of his holy spirit, and be solely directed to his glory and to your edification.

The most holy, and consequently the most advantageous, method of hearing Mass, must be that which tends to unite us most intimately to the spirit of the church, who assembles us at her altars; and to render us most conformable to the intention of Jesus Christ, who presents the oblation in our behalf, and to the prayers and ceremonies that accompany it. The question, therefore, is to determine which of these methods seems best calculated to answer these essential ends. If we examine the practice of Christians, we shall see them all following different methods in this important action. Some exactly follow the priest through all the

prayers that compose the Liturgy, and are scrupulous not to omit any of the formularies chosen by the church to accompany the oblation : this is what is termed the *Ordinary of the Mass*. Others assist their devotion by particular prayers, which, though not the same with those of the Liturgy, differ not materially from its sense, and even serve as an explanation of its meaning. Others, more or less enlightened, more or less filled with the spirit of God, abstain from all reading during this important action, and remain passive to such emotions or reflections as their piety may inspire, without seeking any other means to animate their devotion, than the mere action of the sacrifice. Others, in fine, either persuade themselves that it is allowable to recite such prayers as are entirely foreign to the object of the sacrifice, or else, deprived unfortunately of the advantage of reading, believe they fulfil every obligation, by multiplying the repetition of the Lord's prayer, and the angelical salutation.

I distrust my judgment too much, to decide positively upon either of these methods. I shall content myself with examining them separately, in order to point out the respective abuses to which each is liable, and the dispositions that appear most proper either to rectify these abuses, or to sanctify the methods themselves.

At the head of these various usages, I have placed that of exactly following the minister through every action and prayer of the Liturgy, as, of all others,

it appears the best calculated to make us enter into the spirit of the sacrifice. The church has not decided upon either of these methods; yet she seems particularly to direct our attention to the latter. She has allowed the prayers employed in the holy sacrifice to be placed in the hands of the faithful; she authorizes them to follow in secret what she requires her minister to repeat in a less elevated voice than the rest of the prayers, nor does she consider this as breaking in upon the awful silence of her mysteries. This very indulgence seems intended as an admonition to the faithful, to remind them that the part they bear in the sacrifice, consists not in being mere spectators;—nay, that in a certain sense, they may even themselves be termed sharers in the ministry of the altar, because, when they assist thereat, it should be in the most perfect unison with Jesus Christ. I therefore feel myself authorized in believing and teaching that this method is the best, the most conformable to the spirit of the church, and the most proper to inspire those dispositions which the holy sacrifice requires. Yet why has this method met with such frequent opposition, and that even from the more pious and enlightened of the clergy? Why is it so rigorously interdicted in some of the most edifying communities, and by the masters of a spiritual life? I presume that certain abuses may have introduced a diversity of opinion on this point.

Though we cannot too strongly condemn the conduct of such among the clergy, as devoid of



knowledge and discretion, are induced to condemn this method, through a spirit of prejudice and hasty zeal; yet we ought to praise the exertions of those, who, in taking these prayers from the hands of some of the faithful, have no other view than to remedy existing abuses. If any one were so rash as to believe, that in offering with the priest he really consecrated with him, and that the words of consecration have the same virtue and efficacy in his mouth as in that of the minister of the church, without doubt, the temerity of such a Christian requires to be checked, and his ignorance to be rectified; it is a point of duty to remedy an abuse of this flagrant nature, by interdicting such prayers as serve only to augment and confirm the evil.

It is not less true, that if any among the congregation took the liberty of pronouncing, in a loud and audible voice, what the minister is prescribed by the church to utter in a low tone, he would disturb the harmony of these solemn rites, and distract that profound attention which the minister and the rest of the congregation ought to bestow upon an action of such awful importance.

It is also certain, that if a spirit of curiosity and prejudice should so far attach a man to this particular method, as to induce him, unauthorized, to condemn every other, he would become reprehensible, in departing from those sentiments of humility and charity, which it is the very object of these prayers to inspire.

It is equally evident, that if through a deficiency

of instruction, these prayers become insipid to the Christian who is unable to penetrate their spirit, and if the daily repetition of these same prayers tends rather to excite disgust than fervour, that under these circumstances, an enlightened minister is obliged to correct whatever is reprehensible, and if animated with zeal attempered by knowledge, he will find no difficulty in rectifying these abuses, by inspiring a relish for such methods as are most proper to promote the interests of his flock ; and, preferably to all others, I think he will deem it his duty to propose this, as being the most conducive to their utility. Next to this, the most edifying method is that which the church appears to suggest, by permitting those forms of prayer that are called *Devotions for Mass*, in which the prayers of the Liturgy are explained in a manner at once clear and analagous to the spirit of the originals. This second method is useful for those who feel a difficulty in comprehending the full import, and seeing the whole connection of the prayers of the Liturgy ; and for those in particular, whose understandings are more limited, and who are incapable of entering, by meditation, into the sense of these prayers. To such, a familiar exposition, accompanied by expressions more accommodated to the level of their understandings, and better suited to teach them what they ought to demand of God through Jesus Christ, must be invaluable. But I have already shown, that this method lies open to abuses, and that it is a point of importance

to choose such reflections on this awful mystery, as are solid and well approved. In an affair of such importance, it would be dangerous to trust to one's own judgment; but the choice once made, it is the duty of every Christian, who feels desirous of profiting thereby, never to lose sight of the action of the sacrifice, but so to unite his intention with that of the church, that the difference, in point of form, may in no respects detract from the spirit and the sentiments which all these prayers should inspire. In unison, therefore, with the Sovereign High-priest, he should pass successively from prayer to praise, from praise to oblation, from oblation to adoration; so that it may be truly said, that the language of all hearts is the same; at the altar, as well as in the midst of the congregation, there is the same hearts, the same mind, and the same victim.

It will not, I believe, be found so easy a task to make the third method accord with these dispositions. I speak of that practised by such Christians as take the liberty of reciting at the holy sacrifice all the prayers that either their memory may furnish, or the pious book which they have in their hands may happen to suggest; and who sometimes scruple not to apply their minds to pious reading, edifying in itself, but misplaced at that awful moment when religion summons us to attend to the great mystery of our redemption. My only view, therefore, in noticing this among the other methods

of uniting with the priest, is to convince you of its abuse; and, I trust, that such conviction will require no great effort on my part. Even the least informed among the faithful cannot but see, that to take the liberty of uniting prayers, perfectly different from those of the whole body of the faithful, is, in some measure, to be a stranger in the house of prayer; that whatever grace may have been demanded, the object which Jesus Christ at this particular moment solicits, has not been demanded, and that it is impossible to justify what would not be tolerated even in the society of the world. Should any one in company affect an absence in conversation, or turn from it to some other occupation, he would, with justice, be suspected of contempt to the party: how intolerable, how scandalous, then, must be that contempt which affects the most sacred and the most essential practices of religion!

I cannot pass the same sentence upon the last method which I enumerated. It is possible, that ignorance, or a want of education, may render it impossible for many Christians to follow the prayers of the liturgy, or such others as are analogous to it: I must own, that the number is even considerable. Those, in whom this ignorance has been fostered by a wilful negligence, are to be pitied, perhaps condemned; but if habit has rendered it invariable; if they are incapable of persevering in a state of adoration and uninterrupted recollection during the whole of the sacred mysteries; yet, at

the same time, are well instructed in the object of the sacrifice, how can we forbid their having recourse to such vocal prayers as their memory may furnish? Under these circumstances, may not the Lord's Prayer, which includes every other kind of prayer, be recited with advantage? Is not the repeated invocation of the blessed Virgin, and of the other friends of God, conformable to what the church herself practises in the very prayers of the liturgy? But, in order that these reiterated prayers may produce their desired effect, it is necessary to caution Christians of this description against that kind of habit and routine into which they are so apt to fall: it is necessary to instruct them in the relation which these prayers bear to those that are used in the oblation, and to engage them to pause from time to time, in order to indulge, for some moments, in those feelings of contrition, confidence and adoration, which this sacrifice requires.

I have reserved the close of this Instruction for making some observations on those Christians who, during the celebration of our sacred mysteries, employ no regular forms of prayer as helps to devotion, but entirely yield themselves up to whatever the fervour of the moment may happen to suggest. If this spirit of fervour does really furnish them with whatever can render the holy oblation at which they assist efficacious in their regard, I cannot withhold my admiration; I bless the Lord by whom they are filled with this spirit of prayer; but I should think it dangerous to propose them

as models to my flock. Nay, I hesitate not to declare, that this practice is attended with great inconveniences, and that considering the natural tendency of our minds to distraction, and the natural coldness and langour of our hearts—to distrust this inconstancy of the mind, and this indifference of the heart, by employing such means as the church offers for applying the fruit of the sacrifice, is, according to the advice of the great apostle; ‘ To be wise with sobriety.’

From all these reflections, my brethren, we may justly conclude, that the best method of hearing Mass is that which most closely unites us to Jesus Christ, which most intimately associates us with his spirit, and renders our language most conformable to that of his church. Our demands must come with greater effect, and be made with greater confidence, when it is through him that we petition, with him that we obtain, and in him that we partake the fruit of his prayers. Amen.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

N. B. Page 97, l. 30, read *only* after *office*.









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